UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Staging Pain in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Catherine Clark Zusky

Committee in charge:

Professor Patricia Fumerton, Chair

Professor Ken Hiltner

Professor James Kearney

Professor Michael O'Connell

December 2015

The dissertation of Catherine Clark Zusky is approved.

_____
Ken Hiltner

_____
James Kearney

_____
Michael O'Connell

_____
Patricia Fumerton, Committee Chair

December 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project, which has taken me the better part of ten years, has been an absolute pleasure to construct, but it is an even greater joy to complete it. I would first like to thank my committee chair, Paddy Fumerton, for her incredible enthusiasm and encouragement. Paddy, thank you for believing that I could finish this project successfully. I am so honored to have been your student; you have been an incredible mentor. I would like to thank the other three members of my committee, Ken Hiltner, Jim Kearney, and Michael O'Connell, all of whom stuck with me even after my five year hiatus. Thank you to my parents, Margaret and Paul Zusky, whose pride in my work and support of my dreams exceed all reason. To my unbelievably wonderful husband, Eric Hogenson, I appreciate the genuine love and admiration that you bestow despite the fact that your interests and passions are so different than mine. Thank you for supporting me to finish this project. And finally, to my amazing little distractions, Charlie and Marcus: you are worth it, and I hope you'll someday be proud that your mom got her doctorate in the subject she loves.

VITA OF CATHERINE CLARK ZUSKY
December 2015

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in English, University of California, Santa Barbara, December 2015
Dissertation: "Staging Pain in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama"
Master of Arts in English, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2007
Fields of Specialization: Medieval, Renaissance, General Theory
Bachelor of Arts in English, Dartmouth College, June 2001

HONORS

UC Graduate Fellowship in the Humanities, 2010-2011
English Broadside Ballad Archive Research Grant, UCSB 2010-2011
Dean's Dissertation Fellowship, UCSB, 2009-2010
English Broadside Ballad Archive Research Grant, 2009-2010
Early Modern Center Graduate Student Fellow, UCSB, 2008-2009
Early Modern Center Ballad Fellow, UCSB, Fall 2006

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

UC Graduate Fellow in the Humanities Research Presentation, April 2011.
Early Modern Britain at the University of California: Exploring Political Culture. Invited attendee, October 2010.
"The Pain of Christ as Dynamic Exchange in the York Mystery Plays," The Dynamics of Exchange and Identity Medieval Studies Conference, UCSB, May 2009
"Imaginative Space and Place of Hell in Milton's *Comus,*" Pacific Coast Conference on British Studies, University of San Diego, March 2009.
"Worse Than the Devil: Ferdinand's Hellish Imagination in *The Duchess of Malfi,*" Renaissance Conference of Southern California, Huntington Library, February 2009.
"Filling the Void: Language, Violence and Pain in *Titus Andronicus*," Pacific and Ancient Modern Language Association Conference, Pomona College, November 2008.
"Hybrid Spirituality in *The Dream of the Rood,*" Emotion and the Environment Conference, UCSB, May 2008.
"After-Images of Desire: Visual-Verbal Connections in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market,'" Northeast Modern Language Association, University of Buffalo, April 2008.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

Organizer, "A Night of Performance," Early Modern Center Winter Conference, UCSB, March 2011.
Organizer and Co-Chair, Presiding Officer, "Shakespeare and Related Topics" Panels,

PAMLA, November 2009.
Organizer and Co-Chair, Early Modern Center Conference, "Before Environmentalism," UCSB, March 2009.
Organizer, Early Modern Center Fall Colloquium, "Before Environmentalism," UCSB, November 2008.
Conference Committee, Early Modern Center Conference, "Science and Technology, 1500-1800," UCSB, March 2008.
Conference Committee, Early Modern Center Conference, "Making Publics," UCSB, March 2007.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

English Broadside Ballad Archive Team, UCSB, June 2006-2011.
Research Assistant, *On the Nature of Art: Essential Questions in Environmental Criticism*, for Professor Ken Hiltner, 2009-2010.
Writing 50 Research Project, comparing the efficacy of digital and traditional instruction, under the direction of Karen Lunsford and Chris Dean, 2007-2008.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Editor, UCSB English Department Newsletter, 2008-2011.
Graduate Student Representative, English Department Renaissance Job Search Committee, MLA 2008-2009.
Copy-editor, *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 2009-2010.
Coordinator, Early Modern Drama Discussion Group, 2009-2010.
Coordinator, UCSB English Department Brown Bag Lunch Series, 2008-2009.
Member, Council of Graduate Students, 2008-2011.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Brentwood School, Los Angeles
Instructor of English and Department Chair, 2011-present

University of California, Santa Barbara

Teaching Associate: English 10, "Fear, Horror, and Monstrosity," Summer 2008
Instructor: Writing 2, Writing Program, Fall 2007, Winter 2008, Spring 2008
Teaching Assistant: English 105A, "Early Shakespeare," Spring 2007, Winter 2006
Guest Lecture: "The Merchant of Venice: The Cost of Comedy, or Equity Strained," May 24, 2007; English 105B, "Shakespeare: Later Plays," Winter 2007

Los Angeles Unified School District, The Westmark School
Teacher and Volleyball Coach, Grade 10-12 English and Writing Courses, 2003-2005

Dartmouth College Teaching Program in the Marshall Islands, Ejit Island

Project Initiator and Teacher, Grades 1-6 and Adult Education, 2001-2003. (Piloted program with two fellow Dartmouth graduates; lived and worked for two years on Ejit, a small community of Bikini Islanders who were displaced by U.S. nuclear testing.)

TEACHING INTERESTS

Shakespeare
Shakespeare and Performance
Early Modern Drama (non-Shakespeare)
Early Modern Literature and Culture
Early Modern English Ballads
Late-Medieval Drama
Violence and the Rhetoric of the Body
Gender and Sexuality

LANGUAGES

Marshallese (reading and speaking proficiency)
Spanish (reading and speaking proficiency)
Old English (reading proficiency)

ABSTRACT

Staging Pain in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama

by

Catherine Clark Zusky

This dissertation traces the staging of pain from the late medieval Passion pageants, particularly in York, into the performances of the work of Kyd, Shakespeare, and Webster. The project challenges the assumption that there is a deep phenomenological divide between late medieval plays and the stage of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. I focus specifically on staged pain, using the Passion sequences in the late-medieval mystery plays as a foundation from which to understand the representation of pain on the emerging commercial stage of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Pain is the crux for me because it functions as an intersection between embodiment and imagination, physical and mental experience; it is a means by which to investigate tensions surrounding ideas of cognition and materiality as they operated before, during, and through the Protestant Reformation. My work extends from, but nuances the substantial body of critical work on the body and violence. I argue that while violence may be representable, public, and describable, its result, physical pain, exists as an inherently subjective, internal and indescribable experience.

The introduction to my project frames the issue of pain from medieval and early modern perspectives, and through the lens of contemporary criticism. I assess sermons, religious tracts, medical documents, and political statements to flesh out a picture of the ways in which pain was imagined, experienced, and utilized in the period. I then consider the work of theorists such as Elaine Scarry, Drew Leder, Hannah Arendt, and David Morris to construct the critical and philosophical framework of my project.

In my first chapter, I offer an extended analysis of the Passion sequence at York, with a focus on the Tilemakers' *Christ before Pilate (2): The Judgement*. I begin the chapter with an examination of late medieval drama as multisensory, three-dimensional, dynamic *performance*. While this may seem a mundane objective, I argue that the mystery plays have long and often been viewed as static artifacts, and criticism has privileged the visual in assessing their dramatic and cultural functions. Further, I draw upon the work of critics such as David Aers and Michael O'Connell in hopes to redress what Aers calls the "amnesia" of early modernists about the possibility of imagining "modern" subjects prior to the Reformation. Ultimately, I suggest that the dramatic construction of pain, so essential to the didactic purposes of the Corpus Christi festival, also functions as a dynamic and multivalent exchange which *performs* the problem of believing without embodied experience.

The second chapter assesses the dramatic and ontological "gaps" surrounding the performance of pain in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. As we see in The Tilemakers' play at York, Shakespeare and Kyd are preoccupied with staging pain, with the troubles posed by language as we try to articulate the subjective experience of observable facts, and with the problem of other (suffering) minds. In both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, the body in pain is evacuated of stable meaning, it evades

verbal signification, and it gestures to the stark horror of the human cycle of violence. Each play demonstrates conspicuous and repetitive verbal attempts to communicate about pain and to request help in response to it; the body in pain in these plays introduces a significant anxiety about the nature of language.

The third chapter uses current research in cognitive theory to read John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi;* the chapter examines the emergence of a conspicuously language-inspired, imagination-oriented representation of pain in the play. The mind's capacity to imagine pain, the play suggests, far outweighs the body's capacity to feel it. Critics have often criticized Webster's play for its excessive violence and horror; indeed, *The Duchess of Malfi* meditates on the human condition of pain at great length. However, it also departs from a tradition of dramatic bloodbaths to reposition the specter of violence and the bodily sensation of pain in terms of mental experience.

The fourth chapter investigates the performance history of particular moments of pain, including the scourging of Christ in the Passion plays, the mutilation of Lavinia in *Titus*, and the gouging of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear*. This history indicates varied audience response to moments of staged pain; divergent reactions to these moments in performance suggest the tenuous boundary between empathy and laughter.

The dissertation thus traces a transformation in anxiety from the dangers and vulnerabilities of the body, to those of the mind. Throughout, I draw on my broader interests in narrative theory, performance theory, the phenomenology of pain, and the cognitive and emotive ramifications of theater.

I. Introduction

At the temporal center of Shakespeare's first tragedy, the titular character, Titus Andronicus, faces an excess of physical and emotional pain. After the tribunes of Rome reject him and banish his son, Titus confronts the bleeding and mutilated body of his only daughter, Lavinia. He rashly dismembers his own hand and then witnesses the spectacle of two more of his sons' decapitated heads, presented to him with ceremony. Consuming the onstage mayhem, an audience witnesses Lavinia's silent, hemorrhaging presence paired with her father's sudden and painful act of self-mutilation. As an onstage witness to this exhibition of pain, Titus's brother Marcus predicts that any spectator must tear his hair, gnash his teeth, or close his eyes at such a sight (3.1.259-263). However, as a witness to his own tragedy, Titus performs the unexpected: he laughs.

Titus's response to the disaster of his own life, and to this spectacle of incredible bloodshed, models the complexities of problems in staging pain. In fact, given the historical context of Shakespeare's play, Titus's behavior becomes emblematic of the challenges to representing, enacting, witnessing, and believing fictionalized versions of this very real human experience: perhaps an audience *should* respond with empathy, but laughter emerges as a potential reaction to such horror. Early modern drama is rife with such gruesome bodily damage, as evidenced by spectacles like the ravaged corpse of Horatio in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the onstage gouging of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear,* and the eight onstage murders, one severed hand, two severed heads, and two human-meat pies in *Titus Andronicus*. Did theatrical suffering delight early modern theater-goers? Why was the ruin

of bodies so popular and so prolific on the early modern stage? How and why was physical pain an important part of drama?

This dissertation traces the staging of pain from the late medieval Passion pageants, particularly in York, into drama of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The project challenges the assumption that there is a deep phenomenological divide between late medieval plays and the stage of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Staged pain, with a focus on the Passion sequences in the late-medieval mystery plays, forms a foundation from which to understand the representation of pain on the emerging commercial stage of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly in the works of Kyd, Shakespeare, and Webster. While the physical form of the body in pain functions similarly in York as it does in Shakespeare, as we look later into the commercial theater, the object of horror and the conception of pain functions within an interior and subjective space. Pain is the crux in these plays because it marks an intersection between embodiment and imagination, physical and mental experience; the body in pain commemorates, signifies, and produces tensions about representation, subjectivity, memory, and belief.

In *The Body in Pain,* Elaine Scarry attributes the representation of bodily materiality to a crisis of intellectual belief: "when there is within a society a crisis of belief – that is, when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief either because it is manifestly fictitious or because it has for some reason been divested of ordinary forms of substantiation – the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of 'realness' and 'certainty.'"[1]

[1] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*: *The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14.

Under the pressures of an iconoclast culture, which prohibited the staging of Christian images, and emerging tension about the stability of language, knowledge and place, the early modern theater appropriated the visual spectacle of the body to repeatedly play out crises of uncertainty and ambivalence. First, the iconoclastic prohibition of certain images displaced or destroyed the two driving representational possibilities for conceptualizing and understanding pain: the transcendent pain of Christ and the eternal pain of Hell. While medieval drama, such as the York Mystery plays, aimed to represent the human experience of exquisite pain through the crucifixion and the spiritual and physical possibilities for torture and pain in representations of Hell, early modern drama compulsively repeated yet reformatted these representations. As Cecile Williamson Cary notes, "Protestant iconoclasm resulted in the suppression of actual representations of divine mysteries, and some Protestant thinkers entertained non-literal conceptions of hell."[2] Similarly, dramatic figures such as the crucifix-like image of Horatio's body in *The Spanish Tragedy* and the mangled body of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* subvert in order to re-create space for imagery of Christ-like pain onstage.

Complicating the problem of representation were the “facts” of geographical, astronomical and cartographical advancements, which began to create "real" boundaries of place and space, and further constrained the boundaries of imagination and belief in relation to place. If the ultimate place of pain, Hell, was no longer a "place," how could it be represented? Early modern contemporaries, we find, began to re-envision Hell, the ultimate signifier of bodily and spiritual pain, as an interior, or internal state. But such a re-

[2] See Cary quoted Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler, ed., *The Iconography of Hell* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan Press, 1992), 187.

conceptualization was fraught with tension and ambivalence. How even might this interior state be imagined and staged? This is the question this dissertation seeks to address, specifically by focusing on Jacobean drama and its bodily, material, and theological roots in medieval drama.

The crisis of the early modern stage does not simply constitute a representational tension, we find, but also an essential problem of conceptualizing, imagining, and understanding the human condition in relation to pain. From a modern perspective, it is hard to conceive the multiple and various ways in which the experience of bodily pain consumed the human experience of the early modern subject. In early modern England, citizens were witness to everything from public executions to childbirth. Any regular theater-goer may have suffered from a common toothache or from the pains of the plague. Staged pain in a Christian context, such as the Passion plays, establishes a relationship between the "pained" subject position of any audience member and divine rationale: pain, though inherently unseeable and unshareable, links the abjection of human experience to the hope of heavenly experience. But the transformation of staged bodies in pain through the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods articulates a continued need for audiences to connect and respond to such representation, even without external and communal signifiers to explain suffering.

In addition to the phenomenological question of how to represent moments and places of unrepresentability, such as moments of pain, dramatic representation faced practical and cultural obstacles. Staging a rape in the early modern period, for instance, was taboo. But staging the after-effects was not: the signifier of a rape's lasting pain, Lavinia's bleeding body, haunts the stage as a reminder of the central act of violence. In a parallel way, the physical constraints of representation imposed by the technologies of staging

necessitated a reliance on language to fill in for "missing moments"; for instance, Marcus's ekphrastic speech in *Titus Andronicus* attempts to give shape to the space left by the offstage violence of Lavinia's rape. Language works to describe but ultimately fails to explain Lavinia's body in pain.

I observe works from the York realist to John Webster as a dramatic arc rather than a rift. The work of Michael O'Connell and Huston Diehl explores iconoclasm and its impact upon representational practice, which forms a scholarly foundation for a discussion of early modern drama as a manipulation or subversion of earlier forms of drama.[3] David Aers has observed that "it is still rare for scholars to work with any seriousness across the institutional divide between 'medieval' and 'early modern' or 'Renaissance.'"[4] But many critics have argued that the dramatic traditions and practices of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries established direct links to performance in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.[5] In

---

[3] In particular, I am indebted to Michael O'Connell's work in *The Idolatrous Eye* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and to Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[4] David Aers, "New Historicism and the Eucharist," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33:2 (Spring 2003): 241. Aers's suggestion of this scholarly rarity is a pointed attack on Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism*, which, he suggests, applies New Historical methodology to misread the Eucharist in medieval culture.

[5] My work in this project is indebted to the scholarship of critics such as Cathy Shrank, James Kearney, Brian Cummings, and Paul Whitfield White, all of whom work to understand continuity between "medieval" and "early modern" literature and culture. In *Writing the Nation in Reformation England 1350-1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Shrank reads the works of authors from Andrew Borde and John Leland through Spenser and Sidney to conceptualize the trajectory of "fiction" writing in relation to national consciousness between 1350 and 1580. In *The Incarnate Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), Kearney investigates the complicated, and often ambivalent, ways that the book was imagined through the Reformation and into the "religion of the book" conceptualized in Bacon's *New Atlantis*. Cummings's scholarship in *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) traces the relationship

fact, temporally, in the final third of the sixteenth century, medieval mystery plays and the emergent Renaissance theater overlapped.[6] Across and through this historical arc, we find most interestingly that several problems function similarly in both the Tilemakers' play and in Shakespeare's representation of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*: the dramatic scaffolding of staged pain, the repetitive and unsuccessful attempts of language to mediate between the visual signifier of a body and its subjective experience, and the difficulty of accessing the subjective experience of another person.[7] Admittedly, there are several clear differences

---

between literature and theology through the Reformation, while Whitfield White's work investigates drama and religion from 1485-1660. Branching from the research on drama of Michael O'Connell and Peter Womack's "Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century," in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing,* ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), I further investigate the trajectory of the means, conditions, and ramifications of performance between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[6] Michael O'Connell, "Vital Cultural Practices: Shakespeare and the Mysteries," *JMEMS* 29:1 (1999): 149-68. In this article, O'Connell suggests that Shakespeare, for example, *did* see the Coventry plays, which were performed until 1579 (he suggests that we eliminate the word "if" in this situation). In "Imagining Communities," Womack notes the continuity between the forms of drama in his discussion of the year 1576. This year was monumental not just because James Burbage's leased land in Shoreditch to build "The Theatre," but because the Diocesan Court of High Commission in York wrote a letter to the mayor of Wakefield to ban the Corpus Christi plays.

[7] While my focus is continuity, critical treatment of the mystery plays often relies on the assumption of rupture between medieval and Renaissance performance. For instance, in Margaret Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005), she discusses a clear shift from medieval embodiment and materiality to Renaissance abstraction and immateriality. While Owens ultimately problematizes the vulnerability of corporeal signs both before and after the Reformation, her study is founded upon the assumption that the Reformation was a traumatic rupture, a break; therefore, in her reasoning, resonances of the "medieval" body onstage in the Renaissance can only be explained as "uncanny" returns, rather than continuous links within a tradition. The work of Huston Diehl is likewise premised upon the notion of rupture. In *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1997), she says that "Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is both a product of the Protestant Reformation—a reformed drama—and a producer of Protestant habits of thought—a reforming drama. [Early modern] dramatists represent, reflect on, and sometimes

between civic drama and the succeeding public theater: for instance, though the cycle plays were regional and tied to religious festivals, the London theater of Shakespeare and his contemporaries was commercial and professionalized. However, while the cycle plays were affiliated with religious events, they were produced, funded, and enacted by *civic*, rather than religious, groups.[8] More importantly, these plays were *performative*: they were not just showing; they were *doing*. Between the early sixteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth century, in other words, *all* dramatists engaged with the difficulties of representing concrete, perceptual "evidence" of suffering bodies and places of horror onstage and an abstract, imagination-oriented and language-inspired mode of representation. Such theatrical problems are not born with the Reformation like Venus out of the ear of Jupiter.

While post-Reformation iconoclasm has often been cited as the central "crisis" in representation of the early modern period, this project investigates the problem of staged pain as a part of a larger network of cultural and historical moments that contribute to the issues of representation and unrepresentability. Clifford Davidson's *The Iconography of Hell* provides a fascinating and detailed historiography of medieval and early modern Hell imagery; I expand upon such iconographic scholarship to explore how the imagery of pain

---

seek to redress the ruptures caused by the English Reformation" (1-3). In *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), Stephen Greenblatt similarly conceptualizes a kind of Reformation inspired black-hole: he suggests that English drama experienced a "fifty-year effect, a time in the wake of the great, charismatic ideological struggle in which the revolutionary generation that made the decisive break with the past is all dying out and the survivors hear only hypocrisy in the sermons and look back with longing at the world they have lost" (248).

[8] O'Connell "Vital Cultural Practices," 149-68. His article provides several cogent examples of explicit references within Shakespeare's theater to medieval cycle plays.

and Hell made its way into the language and the staging of early modern drama.[9] The New Historicist work of Stephen Greenblatt, and in particular his discussion in *Hamlet in Purgatory* of Purgatory as a powerful imaginative space, also informs my understanding of pain in the period.[10] While Greenblatt comprehensively explores Purgatory as a shifting fantasy construction to manipulate fear and belief in the early modern period, I consider how Hell functioned as a paradigm of ultimate horror and pain. I also incorporate the considerable body of critical work, including that of Deborah Burks, Cynthia Marshall, and Linda Woodbridge, that seeks to understand *violence* in early modern drama as a reflection or reproduction of misogyny, political rhetoric, legal discourse, or public displays of capital punishment.[11] However, while violence is often implicit in the production of pain, the body in pain onstage, I argue, is a complex signifier in and of itself, which signifies beyond and through a simple reflection of the discourse of power played out onstage as "violence." Using the work of Elaine Scarry, Drew Leder, Hannah Arendt, and David Morris to construct a critical and philosophical framework, I seek to understand the function of reproductions and representations of the body in pain onstage in the early modern period as central moments of signification to organize and construct meaning.[12] I move beyond these

---

[9] Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler, ed., *The Iconography of Hell* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan Press, 1992).

[10] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[11] In particular, Deborah Burks, *Horrid Spectacle: Violation in the Theater of Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2003); Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); and Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler, ed., *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature: Essays Honoring Paul Jorgenson* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003).

[12] My understanding of the phenomenology, physiology, and politics of pain emerged first from Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). But my

critics by returning us to the physicality of the body in pain as a representational problem in and of itself. Not only do I show that the body in pain functioned as a representational problem across historical divides but also that dealing with the problem on stage points to the ways in which pain, whether staged or real, is always essentially performative.

As a counter to the challenges of unrepresentability, early modern drama manipulated language, re-positioned action, and utilized the materiality of the body to conceptualize and fuel the collective imagination about pain. This study considers the ways that language, in the dramatic context, seeks to transform, manipulate, and fill in for (but not replace) moments of absence in dramatic action or visual spectacle. Recent studies linking cognitive theory with performance, including the work of F. Elizabeth Hart and Bruce McConachie, present the potential for language and bodies onstage to actually shape and inform the cognition of audience members.[13] The work of enacting pain onstage creates a bridge between fictional representation and an audience member's subjective, embodied experience of the world. The body in pain onstage actually *does something* not only to the bodies of the actors representing such suffering but also to the audience members who witness the enactment. Therefore, shifts in staged pain mark a simultaneous shift in early modern subjectivity, especially in relation to the divine.

In many ways, my project also aligns with and adds to recent critical and theoretical work in affect theory. As Patricia Ticineto Clough discusses in her introduction to *The*

---

readings have nuanced Scarry's conception of pain with readings of Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) and David Morris, *The Culture of Pain.* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991). Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1969) also contributed to my differentiation between violence and pain.

[13] Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart, ed., *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social, theorists of the body, such as Judith Butler and Sigmund Freud, position the body as an "organism, a closed system, seeking homeostasis and equilibrium" (11). In contrast, affect theory imagines the body as an open system, both a producer and recipient of information, and as a dynamic component within the necessarily chaotic processes that constitute the social. Just as the turn towards affect theory seeks to "grasp the changes that constitute the social and to explore them as changes in ourselves, circulating through our bodies, our subjectivities," my work on the body in pain seeks to understand the body onstage as a nexus of dynamic exchange.[14] On one level, the body in pain functions within the realm of religious iconography, but as I discuss, beginning in Chapter 1, the performance of pain onstage engages a network of questions about bodily experience in relation to celestial as well as to terrestrial (and thus necessarily to social) subjectivity. Further, in the final chapter, I privilege the body onstage as a site connecting multiple fictional narrative structures, actors onstage, and audience members in a process that can be understood in terms of Clough's and other affect theorists' notion of a chaotic system.[15] Because the interactions between bodies, both spontaneous and staged, fictional and "real," produce energies, ideas, responses, and passions ungoverned by a closed and controlled system of representation, the product of staged pain, we find, can often emerge as the unexpected.

---

[14] Patricia Clough's introduction to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited with Jean Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), beautifully articulates the shift from theorizing the body as static to imagining the body as dynamic and inextricably connected to the social.

[15] Ibid.

Shakespeare's Lavinia typifies this in-between-ness I describe.[16] This project was inspired by my fascination with Lavinia's silent role onstage in *Titus Andronicus*. I found myself captivated by the necessary strangeness and liminality of her presence: bleeding but in motion, suffering but silent, active but a mime. The four chapters that comprise this project emerge from my investigation of other suffering bodies onstage, and the actual performance of such suffering, directly before and after the emergence of *Titus* in the commercial theater.

In the first chapter, "Witnessing, Thinking, and Knowing Pain in the York Tilemakers' Pageant," I investigate the problem of staged pain through a lens of religious history; I offer an extended analysis of the Passion sequence at York, with a focus on the Tilemakers' *Christ before Pilate (2): The Judgment*. I begin the chapter with an examination of late medieval drama as multisensory, three-dimensional, dynamic *performance*. While this may seem a mundane objective, I argue that the mystery plays have long and often been viewed as static artifacts, and criticism has privileged the visual in assessing their dramatic and cultural functions. Furthermore, I draw upon the work of critics such as David Aers and Michael O'Connell in the hope of redressing what Aers calls the "amnesia" of early modernists about the potential for pre-Reformation subjectivity. Ultimately, I suggest that the dramatic construction of pain, so essential to the didactic purposes of the Corpus Christi festival, also functions as a dynamic and multivalent exchange, which *performs* the problem

[16] In particular, onstage, Lavinia functions to exemplify and ignite the affective processes that Gregory J Seigworth and Melissa Gregg describe in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). They suggest that affect "arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass from body to body" (1).

of believing without embodied experience. The suffering body of Christ onstage is intended to inspire meditation and strengthen faith; however, the play's antagonists, Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas, metatheatrically enact the doubt that a witness to pain, staged or otherwise, may experience. The play therefore acknowledges the central challenge to faith: one must believe without physical, embodied knowledge. However, if, like the play's antagonists, the audience fails to believe, both Christ's pain and the faith inherent in it become unproductive, a waste. Thus, the suffering body onstage challenges witnesses to embrace faith in the incomprehensibility of divine logic.

This religious model of pain, and attempts to comprehend and understand it, spill over into Calvinist and Lutheran thinking and into the early modern commercial theater. In the theater of early-Protestant England, the human condition of pain detaches from the embodied figure of Christ onstage. Human pain becomes identifiable only with other human bodies, not with a divine purpose or correlating biblical narrative. Without the connection to a divine representation or rationale, and left with a language-driven set of signifiers, the body in pain seems confusing, meaningless, and disjointed as it is displaced from the symbolic system of Christian meaning. The visual signifiers of Horatio and Lavinia are similar to that of Christ, but the meaning behind them transfers from divine connection to human abjection.

Chapter 2, "Brooking the Void: Language, Pain and Meaning in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus,*" approaches the problem of staged pain in relation to language and signification; I assess the dramatic and ontological "gaps" surrounding the performance of pain in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. The dramatic scaffolding of staged pain, the repetitive and unsuccessful attempts of language to mediate

between the visual signifier of a body and its subjective experience, and the problem of how to access the subjective experience of another person are each crucial problems in Kyd and Shakespeare, much as they were in the Tilemakers' play at York. In both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, the body in pain is evacuated of stable meaning, evades verbal signification, and points to the stark and seemingly stagnant process of change within the human cycle of violence. Each play demonstrates conspicuous and repetitive verbal attempts to communicate about pain and to request help in response to it; the body in pain in these plays introduces a significant anxiety about the capacity of language to access the divine.

I then move into the Jacobean period to investigate a noticeable new shift towards interior *spaces* of pain; I approach the problem of staged pain as it connects with affect and cognition. Spatially and mentally, John Webster interrogates how drama or performance can make pain "real" to others. Pain's "subterranean" quality in his plays actually harnesses and requires the interior imagination of an audience. The third chapter, "'The pain's nothing' in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," more fully draws on current research in cognitive theory to read Webster's play, written approximately twenty-five years after *Titus*. This chapter examines a conspicuously language-inspired, imagination-oriented representation of pain. The mind's capacity to imagine pain, the play suggests, far outweighs the body's capacity to feel it. As English Protestant culture evolves, exquisite pain and diabolical horror derive not from an external signifier but from a deep and interior place of human subjectivity. Critics have often censured Webster's play for its excessive violence and horror; indeed, *The Duchess of Malfi* meditates on the human condition of pain at great length. However, the play in fact departs from a quick and gory bloodbath model of drama to reposition the

specter of violence and the bodily sensation of pain in terms of mental experience. Webster's play conveys a shift in the Jacobean period towards such a deep space of interior representations of pain and hell that, ironically, can no longer even be conceived as geographically or physically "space."

The fourth chapter, "'Why dost thou laugh? it fits not with this hour': Laughing at Staged Pain," investigates the performance history of the plays that comprise my study overall. This history indicates varied audience response to moments of staged pain; divergent reactions to these moments in performance suggest the tenuous boundary between empathy and laughter. Directors have for centuries avoided the risk of disaster in performing *Titus* or *The Duchess of Malfi*; like Titus in his moment of intense despair, witnesses to the spectacles of onstage horror often respond with laughter. However, in other cases, audience members become so affected by the body in pain onstage that they actually lose consciousness. I explore various theories to explain these different affective responses to the staged body in pain.

In some ways, entertainment has not changed significantly in the past four hundred years. Horror movies or reality television series capitalize on an audience's desire to witness the pain of other people. Perhaps it is the very "subterranean" quality of pain that allows it to function as an element of entertainment. It is part of our bodily structures: our own pain is invisible to others, yet we are similarly blind when we serve as the witness. In this way, pain is always, and always has been, a performance. At the same time, it has always been untenable.

II. Witnessing, Thinking, and Knowing Pain in the York Tilemakers' Pageant

Late medieval drama is multisensory, three-dimensional, dynamic performance. While this may seem a mundane claim, a strong case can be made that the mystery plays have long and often been viewed as static artifacts and that criticism has privileged the visual in assessing their dramatic and cultural functions. The York Tilemakers' pageant, *Christ Before Pilate (2): The Judgment*, for example, presents the audience with a dramatic scaffolding that unfolds multiple perspectives on the disconnect between perception (thinking) and embodied experience (knowing). Further, the climax of the pageant, Christ's torture, constructs a matrix of visual, auditory, and verbal signifiers, and functions as the culmination of intricately framed human thought processes. When considered as a multisensory experience, the pain of Christ onstage dialogically performs the problem of the disjunction between perceiving and *knowing* the subjective experience of another body. Thus, the York Tilemakers' play implicates the audience in the onstage action and makes each witness a participant in the perpetration of Christ's subjective physical pain. A close re-examination of this multi-layered drama deepens the ways that we may think about the relationships between subjectivity, Christian drama, and the representation of pain.

Decades before many critics claim the emergence of subjectivity, the York Tilemakers' play rehearses the problem of the divide between witnessing and experiencing. The mystery plays are roots of a performance tradition that extends into the early modern commercial theater of Shakespeare and Marlowe. As the York Tilemakers' pageant demonstrates, the religious drama of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries clearly informs post-Reformation representations of the relationship between body and mind, self and other.

This investigation of the representation of pain onstage illuminates such relationships as well as the historical connectivity between performance in religious drama and on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. Pain is a crucial crux because it functions as an intersection between embodiment and imagination, physical and mental experience; it is thus a means by which to investigate tensions both material and immaterial before, during, and through the Protestant Reformation.[17] How was pain represented onstage, and what function does this representation *perform*? How does the enactment of Christ's pain impact and change the narrative of the Passion? How is the "storyworld" of Christ's pain framed and constructed onstage?[18] What were the purpose and the effect of simultaneous sound, movement, language, intertextual reference, and embodiment in the representations of pain? And finally how does drama negotiate the chasm between perception and knowledge or belief? *Christ Before Pilate (2): The Judgment,* which may be uniquely characterized by its extraneous pain and torture, illuminates vividly the performative function of pain onstage.

David Aers has shrewdly observed that "it is still rare for scholars to work with any seriousness across the institutional divide between 'medieval' and 'early modern' or 'Renaissance.'"[19] However, as I described in my introduction, the dramatic traditions and

---

[17] As critics such as James Kearney and Cathy Shrank acknowledge, the "Reformation" is not an identifiable moment, per se, but an extended, piecemeal process of change. Christopher Haigh suggests a plurality of Reformations.

[18] In *Fictional Minds* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), Alan Palmer suggests that fictional storyworlds "are possible worlds that are constructed by language through a performance force that is granted by cultural convention. When a...narrator makes a statement about a character it is, according to speech act theory, a *performative utterance*: it creates what it says in the act of saying it" (33).

[19] David Aers, "New Historicism and the Eucharist," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33:2 (Spring 2003): 241. Aers's suggestion of this scholarly rarity is a pointed attack on Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism*, which, he suggests, applies New Historical methodology to misread the Eucharist in medieval culture.

practices of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries directly informed and overlapped with the emerging commercial theater of the Elizabethan era. Exploration of subjective space, so often imagined as a particularly Renaissance phenomenon, in fact develops through the work of the religious cycle plays of the medieval period. Thus, an examination of the relationship between thinking, feeling dramatic subjects and an external audience-world in the York Tilemakers' pageant redresses a long-standing critical tradition of "amnesia" in regards to medieval subjectivity.[20] The staged representation of Christ's torture in the York Tilemakers' play presents the isolation of subjective experience and the incommunicability of physical pain. The dramatic scaffolding of staged pain, the repetitive and unsuccessful attempts of language to mediate between the visual signifier of a body and its subjective experience, and the difficulty of accessing the subjective experience of another person are each crucial problems in the Tilemakers' play as much as as Shakespeare's representation of Lavinia's rape and suffering in *Titus Andronicus*.[21] Admittedly, there are

[20] In David Aers' "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists," in *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 177-202, he contends that critics from Terry Eagleton to Francis Barker to Catherine Belsey misdiagnose the emergence of "the subject" as a phenomenon of Shakespearean theater.

[21] While my focus is continuity, critical treatment of the mystery plays often relies on the assumption of rupture between medieval and Renaissance performance. For instance, in *Stages of Dismemberment*, Margaret Owens discusses such a clear shift from medieval embodiment and materiality to Renaissance abstraction and immateriality. While Owens ultimately problematizes the vulnerability of corporeal signs both before and after the Reformation, her study is founded upon the assumption that the Reformation was a traumatic rupture, a break; therefore, resonances of the "medieval" body onstage in the Renaissance can only be explained as "uncanny" returns, rather than continuous links within a tradition. The work of Huston Diehl is likewise premised upon the notion of rupture. In *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1997), she says that "Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is both a product of the Protestant Reformation—a reformed drama—and a producer of Protestant habits of thought—a reforming drama…[Early modern]

several clear differences between civic drama and the succeeding theater: for instance, while the cycle plays were regional and tied to religious festivals, the London theater of Shakespeare and his contemporaries was commercial and professionalized. However, while the cycle plays were affiliated with religious events, they were produced, funded, and enacted by *civic*, rather than religious, groups.[22] More importantly, these plays were *performative*: they were not just showing, they were *doing*. But what kind of work did they do?

The staging of pain in the mystery plays was part of a dynamic, horizontal, and dialogic theatrical experience. The effects of this drama, and in particular the impact of the York Tilemakers' play, incorporated and moreover, necessitated, the participation of an audience, or community. Critics such as Jody Enders have understood the medieval dramas, including mysteries, miracle plays, and farces, as means by which to capitalize on the medieval conviction in torture-inspired truth to "coerce" audiences into believing the didactic program of ecclesiastical authorities.[23] According to this line of thinking, torture in

---

dramatists represent, reflect on, and sometimes seek to redress the ruptures caused by the English Reformation" (1-3). In *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), Stephen Greenblatt similarly conceptualizes a kind of Reformation inspired black-hole: he suggests that English drama experienced a "fifty-year effect, a time in the wake of the great, charismatic ideological struggle in which the revolutionary generation that made the decisive break with the past is all dying out and the survivors hear only hypocrisy in the sermons and look back with longing at the world they have lost" (248).

[22] See Michael O'Connell's "Vital Cultural Practices: Shakespeare and the Mysteries," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 149-68. His article provides several cogent examples of explicit references within Shakespeare's theater to medieval cycle plays.

[23] *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4. In her brilliant work to "reunite" the histories of stagecraft and torture, Enders suggests that Passion plays do the work of ecclesiastical persuasion. She insists that medieval religious dramatists tried to faithfully recreate the story of the Passion by means of

these plays monologically communicates the truth behind the Christian stories that they represent. However, in fact, the "truth" behind the story of the Passion hinges upon the participation (and implicit neglect) of witnesses to Christ's pain. Peter Womack persuasively describes the way in which theatrical enactment both before and after the Reformation "generates a manifestation of *comitatus*, the prior, underlying body to which all–characters and spectators–can feel they belong."[24] However, I would qualify, while the Passion plays narrate a Christian story of "*what everyone knows,*" the embedded narrative simultaneously enacts the isolating and terrifying problem of subjective experience and individual perception. Further, there exists an important phenomenological difference between representations of violence and representations of the subjective experience of pain, a difference that the York Tilemakers' pageant articulates. While violence may be representable, public, and describable, its result–physical pain–exists as an inherently subjective, internal, and indescribable experience. The York plays most certainly functioned within a symbolic and spiritual economy, but their performative work must be considered beyond one-dimensional, "medieval," monologic didacticism.[25]

---

traditional rhetorical tactics. Rhetoric, like torture, "was a dramatic and effective means of conceiving, proving, and enacting the didactic messages" of the Church (2-3).

[24] "Imagining Communities," 136. Womack suggests that since "*everyone knows*" the story of Christ, the plays at York work "to focus the self presence of the 'everyone'" (100). The prismatic, fragmented, and multiply interpretable body of Christ onstage has been described by Sarah Beckwith, both in her article "Ritual, Church and Theatre," in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), and in her book-length project on the subject, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[25] While J.L Austin's sense of "performativity" has often been discredited as a mode of interpreting drama, I adopt W. B. Worthen's call, in *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), to attempt interpretation of dramatic performance beyond the "literary" to understand "theatrical performance as

The critical tradition has frequently frozen the Corpus Christi pageants into inert representational objects; critics have described these plays as images, triptychs, and as the immediate progeny of Christian paintings.[26] However, while the Corpus Christi dramatists may have gleaned inspiration for staging from various static images, as *performance* these plays came alive through the interaction of the language, auditory and visual cues, gesture, facial expression, and motor action of actors with the varied intellectual and emotional responses of an audience. As Bruce McConachie argues, theater is not "primarily a one-way delivery system of messages or fantasies that audiences respond to." [27] Rather, an audience

---

definitive of performativity" (8). Worthen suggests, "Dramatic performance is not determined by the text of the play: it strikes a much more interactive, *performative* relation between writing and the spaces, places, and behaviors that give it meaning, *force*, as theatrical action" (12).

[26] In his book, *Memory, Images, and The English Corpus Christi Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Theodore Lerud pursues Gail Gibson's passing suggestion that the clear distinction between mystery play, spectacle, and tableaux is a modern generic preoccupation. The Corpus Christi drama, he says, must be understood as what he terms a "quick image," (a living picture) which is "phenomenologically different from the later commercial theater" of Shakespeare (5). Using classical theories of memory, with a focus on Aristotle's *De Anima*, Lerud contends that the medieval cycle plays were constructed to exploit sight, which would most effectively impress the mind with images. He goes further, by suggesting that the placement of the anonymous Wycliffite text, "tretise of miraclis pleyinge," next to "an attack on Walter Hilton's defense of images" in British Library MS. Add. 24, 202, provides evidence that the plays were "in the same category as sculpted and painted images" (41). Lerud's discussion of the mystery plays as images is part of a longer critical history. For instance, in 1951, Waldo McNeir suggested that the Passion pageants are comparable to the "central panel of a triptych" (604); Clifford Davidson compares the realistic presentation of the Passion to trends in paintings, particularly those of "northern painters" who brought a new specificity to the Christian story, which were increasingly focused on detail; Sarah Beckwith, in her discussion of the body of Christ as an ambiguous, multivalent sign, suggests that in the Corpus Christi drama Christ's body is a "hybrid image" (45); and Valentin Groebner, in *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, admits to using the word "image" broadly to describe "a representation of the crucified Christ painted, printed, carved of wood, or performed by actors."

[27] Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences. A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

brings social cognition to the theater so that we may "read the minds" of the actors, "to intuit their beliefs, intentions, and emotions by watching their motor actions."[28] In contrast to a static image of Christ's pain, a performance of the Corpus Christi Passion is, as Richard Schechner puts it, a "whole constellation of events," some of them visible and some imperceptible, that occur between performers, between audience members, and between performers and their audience.[29]

The Wycliffite "tretise of miraclis pleyinge," one of few extant sources that gives insight into the fifteenth-century perspective on drama, precisely highlights the multivalent impact of the mystery plays. The Wycliffite text's anonymous author rebukes miracle plays for their multisensory dynamic. The text criticizes the plays' appropriation of "oure fleyss, of our lustis and of our fyue wittis."[30] Indeed, this "tretise" is absolutely preoccupied by the ways in which the five senses *and* the mind become deceived by the "pleye and bourde [amusement]" of the performances. The problem is that the multisensory experience of performing and of witnessing a performance infuses the body and mind with impious thoughts and actions. The anonymous author suggests that the plays cause man to "thenken on alle siche thingis that Crist by the dedis of his passion badde us to forgeten" (84-85) and to falsely believe that there is no "helle of euerelastynge peyne," but rather that hell is an empty threat from God (190-191). Further, the body becomes engaged in actions and behaviors that insult the earnestness of Christ's passion, such as "lawyying [laughing]," and weeping for *one's own* sins rather than for the spectacle of Christ's crucifixion. In fact, both

---

[28] Ibid., 65.

[29] See Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003).

[30] In *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 97-104.

the language and the embodied nature of the plays become distractions according to this author, for "this swetnesse in God wil not been verely had [will not be truly possible] while a man is ocuped in seynge of pleyis" (240-241). This line suggests that both the act of speaking, in the case of the actors, and the act of listening to "seynge" in the case of the audience, is a distraction from holy thought and deed. According to the Wycliffite argument, then, the miracle plays may be characterized by their ability to overwhelm and encapsulate *all* the senses.[31] Further, this text illuminates various performance relationships that framed the onstage dynamic: between performers, between audience members, between performers and audience members, and finally, between individuals and an imagined experience of Christ at the emotive level.

The mystery plays, then, were dynamic, multisensory events for audience members and actors, even as they also functioned as a part of a larger sequence of social and ritual events that included elaborate processions, liturgical ceremonies, preaching, and the work of civic fraternities.[32] The plays were, as Miri Rubin insists, "living events, bound by some

---

[31] While in *Memory, Images, and The English Corpus Christi Drama* Theodore Lerud cites this tretise on miracles as evidence of the primarily visual and image-oriented quality of the Corpus Christi drama, I find evidence of their multivalent qualities within the same text. The Wycliffite text suggests that defenders of the miracle plays argue that miracles of God are painted, so they should be played as well. In fact, the text suggests that "sythen men mowen bettere reden the wille of God and his meruelous werkis in the pleyinge of hem than in the peyntynge, and betere thei ben holden in mennus mynde and oftere rehersid by the pleyinge of hem than by the peyntynge, for this is a deed bok, the tother a quick" (128-132). Lerud uses this statement to prove that the plays were seen, like images, to be "books" by which men might remember biblical stories, but he omits the section of the text that says that proponents of this drama thought that the plays were *better* than images, rather than parallel to them. While the Wycliffite author does indeed compare images to plays, the emphasis, it seems, is on the difference between the two when the living, moving, "quick" elements of a play impact the bodies *and* minds of players and audience members alike.

[32] Margaret Aziza Pappano and Nicole R. Rice state in their article "'Beginning and Beginning Again': Processions, Plays, and Civic Politics in York and Chester," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 30 (2008): 269-301, that the processions and cycle drama were separated

aesthetic rules, but of a far less fixed meaning and form than has been appreciated."[33] The dramas were of varying size and structure; some were *tableaux vivants*, while others were loosely related to the "cycle" drama that we think of as characteristic; song was a part of the Chester and York pageants.[34] The first records of York, from 1376-1377, indicate that the pageants were primarily *tableaux vivants*, or "living pictures" that did not include movement or speaking. However, the performances of plays were in production during the festival by 1399 and, as dynamic performances, the pageants performed monologic *and* dialogic functions.[35] They served both as didactic templates to confer biblical and liturgical knowledge upon the audience and as charged exchange between members of the community, both on and off-stage.[36] Michael O'Connell asserts that the "body of Christ is

---

into two different days during the feast of Corpus Christi. They view this separation "as more than simply a pragmatic decision to accommodate the expanding play cycles" and suggest that the plays are representative of the struggle for craft guilds to participate in liturgical processions (270). Beckwith urges the critical need to consider the heterogeneity of medieval drama in "Ritual, Church and Theatre," wherein she suggests that to conflate "ritual" and "drama" is "to read clerical fantasy as late-medieval reality, and so to disavow the effects of [drama's] reach" (81).

[33] Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 272.

[34] Ibid., 214-285.

[35] Ibid., 280.

[36] I am indebted to William Fitzhenry's article, "The N-Town Plays and the Politics of Metatheater," *Studies in Philology* 100:1 (Winter 2003): 22-43, for his consideration of the monologic and dialogic functions of the N-Town plays. He argues that the plays offer "one-way transference of knowledge from stage to audience" (23), and also "attempt to encourage all members of the audience to think about the relation between drama and politics in new and deeper ways. This drama...raises other contested cultural issues such as the nature of political authority, the parameters of religious freedom, and the possibility of lay education" (42). Fitzhenry's consideration of the dynamic nature of exchange in the N-Town plays is, I believe, relevant to all extant cycles. Broadening on my idea of the various "performance relationships" that take place in the staging of a performance is David Wiles' *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

emphatically central to all the English cycles" and that "violent torture and physical pain are the virtual meaning of the passion plays"[37]; I would like go one step further to consider the multisensory dramatic scaffolding that constructs this "meaning" by negotiating and articulating the vital performance relationships that provide layers to frame Christ's pain. The texts that we now have as our archive of the performances at York indicate that these plays interlaced biblical and intertextual reference, relied upon memory, and incorporated speaking and moving bodies, physical space, and visual and auditory cues. Ultimately, as a multi-sensory theatrical experience, the pain of Christ performs the problem of the chasm between the perception of a witness to pain and the subjective experience of a body in pain.

Among the cycle plays, York's *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgment* provides a particularly ripe site to explore the performative dynamics of the pain of the Passion. However, the complex significations of pain in this play may not be neatly extracted from the narrative and cultural contexts in which it was embedded. Most immediately, a performance of the Tilemakers' pageant was part of a sequence each year in York; not only was the play a part of an annual tradition that capitalized on an audience's memory from year to year, but each year it was performed within the framework of eight other plays in the York Passion sequence. Further, the Tilemakers' pageant performs much apocryphal detail of the torture of Christ before his crucifixion; the superfluous violence and pain in the play

---

Wiles begins his book by explicating Mike Pearson's configuration of the primary transactions that are crucial to a theatrical event. He lists them as "(1) between performers, (2) between audience members, (3) between performers and audience. The position of detached subject vanishes from this conception of theatre because no-one can stand outside these transactions" (3).

[37] *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm & Theater in Early-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 78.

are primarily extra-biblical. Therefore, each performance of this pageant was framed within a matrix of repetition, memory, and imagination.

The Tilemakers' pageant is one of eight plays attributed to the York Realist, and it is the fifth play of nine in this Passion sequence to depict Christ's torture and humiliation at the hands of political and religious leaders.[38] The York Cycle moves from the story of the fall of Lucifer soon after creation to *The Last Judgment*, but the betrayal, mockery, torture, and death of Christ form a clear narrative focal point for the Corpus Christi cycle overall. The performance of the Passion includes nine pageants that take place in the New Testament narrative between the Last Supper and the Harrowing of Hell. In the Bowers and Fletchers' play, soldiers mock and beat Christ at the behest of Annas and Caiaphas and send him to Pilate; in the Tapiters' and Couchers' pageant, *Christ before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate's Wife*, an ambivalent Pilate stands by as Annas and Caiaphas continually mock Christ as a "warlock"; in the Litsters' *Christ before Herod*, Christ, dressed as a fool, silently bears a blustering spew of speech from Herod. In the Tilemakers' play, Christ is brought before Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate once again. Soldiers brutally beat Christ before they subsequently lead him to Calvary in the pageant of the Shearmen, crucify him in the Pinners' pageant, and stand witness to his death in the Butchers' pageant. Thus, the narrative structure of this sequence constructs Christ's pain through a layering and repeating pattern of representation. The Tilemakers' pageant serves as a climactic dramatic experience: the mockery, the verbal harassment, and the violent beating of the previous pageants culminate in a firestorm of all three to precede the climax of the Christian story, the Crucifixion.

[38] As J.W. Robinson argues in "The Art of the York Realist," *Modern Philology* 60:4 (May 1963): 241-251, the plays of the York Realist stand out because they are written in "true" alliterative verse, and they are "remarkable for the detailed and imaginative realism that has gone into their composition" (241).

In general, as noted above, the York plays follow a sequence of events from Old to New Testament, beginning with the fall of Lucifer, and ending with the Last Judgment. However, while the content of the Passion plays derives from the Bible, multiple sources inform and influence the narrative of the pageants. Further, many of the details of the dialogue and of the action of the beating of Christ in the Tilemakers' play in particular, represent the creative license of the playwright. For instance, the figures of Annas and Caiaphas, who are prominent characters of the Passion pageants in each of the four extant medieval mystery cycles, are scarcely mentioned in the gospels of the Bible.[39] Why focus such particular attention upon Annas and Caiaphas, two minor figures? Why the extended narration of torture? Clifford Davidson suggests that extra information in such plays emphasized imagery, or "spectacle," and acted as "meditative aid[s]" to the audience.[40] However, while the imagery of the plays may have produced fodder for meditation after the pageants, the intellectual, emotive qualities of plays in the moment of performance create a far more dynamic effect. In particular, the Tilemakers' pageant draws on an extended multi-

[39] The Gospel of Mark does not mention Annas and Caiaphas by name but refers to the "chief priests" who had delivered Christ to Pilate because of their envy of his powers (Mark 15.1-12). The Gospel according to Matthew does not mention Annas but identifies Caiaphas twice as a "high priest" (Matthew 26.3-4 and 26.57). The Gospel of Luke introduces Annas and Caiaphas as "high priests" in Book 3 but during the trials and crucifixion of Christ mentions "chief priests" (Luke 3.2 and 23). The Gospel of John mentions both figures but identifies Annas as the father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest at the time (John 18.13). Both Mark and John indicate that the chief priests convinced the people to kill Jesus rather than Barabas.

[40] In "The Realism of the York Realist and the York Passion," *Speculum* 50:2 (April 1975): 270-283, Clifford Davidson rationalizes that in the case of the York Realist, extra information is an attempt to "[fill] out scenes and [broaden] [an] understanding of characters" (272) by "drawing upon unnecessary or unwarranted details," and suggests that the purpose of these intense layers of detail was "not to provide psychological release into dramatic game or entertainment…The plays…were deliberately designed to impress feelingly upon the people the spectacle of the Christian story" (283).

sensory map of visual and verbal signifiers; these signifiers trigger both memory and imagination in the audience and thus structure the framework, or storyworld, of Christ's pain.

Critics have long speculated as to which sources the York Realist consulted to construct the "realistic" world of Christ's Passion. Critics such as J.W. Robinson, Richard Beadle, and Pamela King cite *The Northern Passion* and the apocryphal *The Gospel of Nicodemus* as sources for the York Passion pageants; Clifford Davidson suggests Nicholas Love's *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* as a primary influence upon the York Realist. Frances A. Foster's 1916 edition of *The Northern Passion* suggests that the text was copied frequently, as evidenced by multiple extant manuscripts, and that it was "easily accessible to English playwrights."[41] He suggests that the York plays and the *Passion* relate in terms of "(1) a general similarity in outline due to their common scriptural basis; (2) agreement in incidents, which, though non-Biblical, are drawn from a great store of medieval tradition common to many writers; (3) agreement in incidents, small in themselves, which are found nowhere else in Middle English, and either rarely or not at all in Latin and French."[42] Versions of the Middle English *The Gospel of Nicodemus* include sustained attention to the roles of Annas and Caiaphas, which become a serious focus for the York Realist. There was no shortage of popular medieval texts to offer material to inspire detailed, realistic imagery of Christ's torture and pain: *The Complaint of Our Lady* provides an extended, first-person narrative account of the beating and brutalization of Christ at the

[41] *The Northern Passion,* ed. Frances A. Foster (London: Early English Text Society, 1916), 81.
[42] Ibid., 42. Foster provides an outline and specific similarities between *The Northern Passion* and the York Passion plays.

hands of soldiers from the perspective of the Virgin Mary; Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* beseeches the reader to meditate on the Passion of Christ, and concentrates on Christ's pain and the specific punishments he suffered; *The Prickynge of Love's* unflinching attention to wounds and pain suggests the power of the imagination to absorb the experience of Christ into one's own body.[43] However, while these proposed source narratives rely upon the imagination of a reader to conjure the body of Christ, in the Tilemakers' pageant the audience can *see* the actual human form of the actor onstage.

It is not possible to pinpoint why the York Realist framed the Passion the way that he did, or from which sources he gleaned the material for his ultimately "realistic" details.[44] However, it is profitable to consider the result, or impact, of having included these details upon the performance, the performative work, and the storyworld of the pain of Christ. The first of the dramatic narrative frames of *Christ before Pilate (2): The Judgment* is obviously the biblical story of Christ's arrest, persecution, and conviction by Pilate. From the seed of the gospels, with the aid of external sources, the York Realist fleshes out the details of the characters of Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas. Pilate, while a blustering and bossy authority figure, is ultimately a deeply unstable character. His introductory threatening speech is followed by a display of his shameless desire for flattery; his character evolves in this play to display a profound conflict in regard to his responsibility to convict and crucify Christ. At

---

[43] *The Prickynge of Love*, ed. Harold Kane and Walter Hilton (Salzburg, Austria: Institut fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universitat Salzburg, 1983) also suggests that imagining in enough detail, as with an "inner eye" (22), will allow one to be "crucified with Jhesu" (9).

[44] In "The Art of the York Realist," J.W. Robinson, agreeing with the evidence above, points out that the Realist did not create his plays from nothing: Roger Burton, the town clerk, compiled a list of the plays in detail in 1415, a document which reveals that the extant plays are different from his records. Therefore, according to Robinson, it is clear that the Realist revised from the originals (241).

this point in the narrative, Annas and Caiaphas have assumed the roles of flattering prelates, hungry to persuade Pilate of Christ's guilt. However, in the narrative arch of the pageants as a sequence, the prelates, and Caiaphas in particular, have also *evolved* to become punishment-hungry figures. While in *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas*, Caiaphas is determined patiently to assess the criminal before him (he urges a rash Annas that they must "grope if this game be gradely begun" (204)), by the time the narrative arrives at the Tilemakers' pageant, Caiaphas beseeches Pilate that this "faitour...should be slain" (103-104).[45] Their conviction in Christ's guilt eventually rubs off on Pilate: although he is reluctant until the very end, Pilate is finally persuaded to command the soldiers to "take this caitiff in keeping,/ Skelp [whip] him with scourges and with scathes [blows] him scorn./ Wraist [twist] and wring him too, for woe till he be weeping,/ And then bring him before us as he was before" (336-339). Ultimately, the blood-thirsty zeal of the prelates moves Pilate to condone and authorize the torture of Christ.

Most interestingly, far from serving as one-dimensional, fixed characters, the figures of authority in the Tilemakers' play display a complicated, sequential evolution of cruelty. The play traces decision-making, doubt, and the ways in which desire interrupts one's ability to perceive truth and justice. Annas and Caiaphas's persuasions of Pilate, and their repetitive, unflagging insistence upon Christ's punishment, perform the potential for warped and unjust leadership. Pilate's long, drawn-out process of deciding to punish Christ, despite his misgivings, demonstrates the factor of choice and of persuadability in the eventual display of horrific pain and torture. The overall escalation of individual eagerness and bloodthirstiness within the Passion narrative develops an entire mental process of decision-

[45] Here and throughout, quotations are from Richard Beadle and Pamela King's edition of the *York Mystery Plays*, and the translations are mine.

making in the infliction of pain upon Christ. This detail is drawn from a few scant lines of gospel and appears to serve several functions. First, the escalation builds and parallels the narrative drive towards the Christian "climax," the crucifixion of Christ. Just as this moment is one of horror, it is crucial for the culmination of Christian salvation. Second, the pageant unfolds the workings of three-dimensional, realistic human minds in the framing and execution of Christ's pain. The speech, behavior, perceptual and conceptual viewpoints, and the plans for the future of the executors of Christ's torture construct frames for the audience to piece together their mental processes.[46] Thus, the figures of authority are realized not simply as cruel, pagan monsters but as people with real minds like the audience, who cultivate decisions in apparently logical sequences.

The Tilemakers' pageant draws dynamically on narrative material extraneous to the bible to construct the three-dimensional "meaning" of Christ's pain; in a performance, these intertextual connections produce fertile possibilities to supplement an audience's tools for imagining the circumstances of pain. On the level of performance, the play also draws on the audience itself as a way to create meaning in the narrative. Pilate opens the Tilemakers' pageant with a threat that serves two purposes: he says, "Lordings that are limit to the lore of my liance, [People who are assigned to the teachings of my allegiance] / Ye shapely shalks [servants, men] and sheen [shining, good-looking] for to show, / I charge you as your

[46] In *Fictional Minds*, Alan Palmer suggests that, "Just as in real life the individual constructs the mind of others from their behavior and speech, so the reader infers the workings of fictional minds and sees these minds in action from observation of characters' behavior and speech" (11). Palmer essentially suggests that narrative theory has for too long focused on the privacy of inner speech and neglected the various ways in which the mind is visible/invisible to others, and visible/invisible to the self. In drama, in the absence of soliloquy, the internal monologues of characters are unavailable; Palmer's theory is useful in exploring alternative ways in which the dramatic framework provides an audience with a sense of the minds of the characters onstage.

chieftain that ye chat for no chance,/...As a duke I may damn you and draw [punish]" (1-5).[47] His diatribe against talking is itself an excessive display of threatening language: he warns his audience, including Caiaphas, Annas, soldiers, and also a potentially chatty viewing audience to "stint of your stalking" and "chat for no chance," or to stop moving around and talking. His speech introduces a scene of sound and motion, and warns all people within the space (both actors and audience members) with a threat to "him hurt full sore" who "over-brathly [too loudly] is brawling, / Or unsoftly will say in these sales [halls], / That caitiff thus carping and calling" (13-24). He both threatens the soldiers onstage and the people of an audience; this threat may be practical in that it serves to quiet a potentially unruly audience, and prepares them for "appropriate" attention to the scene before them. However, it is also a fictional and metatheatrical reminder of the threats of authority – as a figure of authority within the play, and as a representative of authority more generally, Pilate reminds the audience of his ability to inflict pain: "Talk not nor treat not of tales, / For that gome [man] that grins or gales [cries out in complaint], / I myself shall him hurt full sore" (22-24). The "crime" in question is that of speaking. Language, then, is articulated as punishable.

Just as Pilate's initial warning extends to both speakers within and outside of the stage-world, the play again implicates the audience to resolve a conflict between Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas. Although Annas and Caiaphas are determined to punish Christ, Pilate is ambivalent, saying "For no shame him to shend will we shun" (105), meaning that *if* he is not guilty, Pilate will not punish him. Caiaphas summons a group of men to settle the

[47] While, as J.W. Robinson points out in "The Art of the York Realist," this kind of boastful, threatening speech was a conventional, "recognized method of beginning a play" (243), the speech does specific, performative work, to threaten and silence both performers and audience members.

dispute: “Simon, Jairus and Judas, / Dathan and Gamaliel, / Naphtali, Levi and Lucas, / and Amys these matters can mell [mix] / Together. / These tales for true can they tell / Of this faitour [imposter] that false is and fell [wicked], / And in ledging [alleging] of laws full lither [base, wicked]” (112-119). Here, Caiaphas suggests that an audience would be able to tell the difference between truth and falsehood. Within the fiction of the play, this summoned group of men serves to support the ultimately unjust decision of Annas and Caiaphas against Christ. It is unclear from the text whether this possible audience is actually onstage, if they are simply an imagined threat, or if, perhaps, the actor gestures to the “Simons” and “Levis” in the viewing audience.

On a different level, the Christian audience, of course, knows the story; they already know that Christ is “true,” while his captors are false. Enders writes that "the truth of the Passion (or of what Erich Auerbach called its 'great drama') was not really open to question by medieval Christians. It was not thought to be an illusion."[48] However, this acknowledgment of the audience’s ability to discern truth conflicts with the orders at the beginning by Pilate to be silent: while many in the general audience know who is true and who is false, they have also been commanded to silence. This, it seems, is part of the performative action of the drama *upon* the audience—both their silence and their speaking out to right the situation are problematic. Pilate resumes his pessimistic stance by arguing that “These witnesses I warrant that to witness ye wage, / Some hatred in their hearts against him have hent [held]” (121-122). So again, the audience, if implicated in the title “these witnesses,” is assigned their position as hateful, cruel people.

[48] Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*, 59.

The drama effectively performs work upon the audience; as necessarily silent witnesses, each member of the audience participates in a denial of truth. In her comparison between the actions of plays and criminal trials in *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry asserts that the action of a play "is complete and cannot be altered; its audience must passively bear it," while the action of a trial "is incomplete and can be mimetically altered; its audience, the jury, is empowered to in some sense reverse it, and it is *only* because this possibility exists that the story is being retold."[49] York's *Christ Before Pilate (2): The Judgment* functions as both play and trial: while the pageant is a play, it is simultaneously staged as a trial. Just as Judas betrays and Peter denies, the audience essentially re-enacts the denial and betrayal by watching the scene unfold in its extended, messy, imprecise cruelty. Scarry observes that "implicit in this mimesis of restorability [where audience acts as jury] is the belief that catastrophes are themselves (not simply narratively but actually) reconstructable, the belief that the world can exist, usually does exist, should in this instance have existed, and may in this instance be 'remakable' to exist, without such slippage… everyone....[has] the *passive wish* that what is so were otherwise…"[50] In the repetition of the trials of Christ before Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate, the audience is implicitly and performatively implicated in the reenactment of the unmaking of Jesus, which in turn "makes" Christian salvation.

Individuals within the audience are thus implicated in the actions of the performance: they are witnesses, perceivers, judges, and beneficiaries themselves. Just as individual subject positions are articulated and enacted through performance, individual subject

[49] *The Body in Pain,* 298.

[50] Ibid., 299.

positions of audience members are targeted as important and identifiable.[51] J.W. Robinson suggests that the York Realist's work is both interested in the "process of behavior" and in the "mental processes" that take place in the pageants.[52] While the play is invested in physical "realism," the action and dialogue also suggest an emotional, perceptual realism in terms of the ways that people witness and believe the pain of others. In particular, the play enacts doubt, disbelief, and ultimately, indifference to Christ's pain as Pilate communicates the essential unknowability of others' pain. In the spirit of the trial-play, he repeatedly interrogates forms of evidence and testimony to discern truth; Pilate therefore performs the limitations of human perception in the pursuit of knowledge, belief, and truth.

Pilate continually exhibits his ambivalence towards the "evidence" of Christ's crime. He calls the accusations "tales" and "hatred" and reminds Annas and Caiaphas that Herod found "no fault" in the man. Pilate detects a problem with the evidence– language does not constitute substantial proof to Pilate to justify punishment of Christ. He does not see or hear anything that constitutes "proof," and acknowledges the possibility that the accusations of Annas and Caiaphas are fraudulent in lines 130-131 when he says, "If ye feign like frauds I shall fell you,/ For me likes not your language so large." However, Annas pleads with Pilate

[51] Womack, "Imagining Communities," underscores the importance of the entire community's presence at a performance of the Corpus Christi plays (99). He formulates the performance as engaging in two dramatic modes: "one which locks characters into time and into the immediate practicalities of their own play, and the other which presents them as medieval Christians" (103). He suggests that actors can navigate between these modes because the audience has already bought into "its common membership of the body of Christ" (103). While this analysis of *comunitas* is vital in considering the unifying elements of the performance, it is equally important to consider how the play constructs the subject as an individual, and thereby appeals to individual subjectivities within the audience.

[52] In "The Art of the York Realist," Robinson uses the example of the extensive process of persuasion enacted by Annas and Caiaphas to convince Pilate that Christ deserves punishment. Pilate weighs the situation carefully before deciding to punish Christ; he does so, according to Robinson, "only when the accusations thus affect him directly" (245).

and says “Yes, sir, dread you not for nothing we doubt him” (137). His appeal suggests that their accusations may be substantiated, and that their enthusiasm for Christ's punishment is “not for nothing.” External, tangible, shareable proof may not exist, but the prelates claim that their word is substantial, and they suggest that Pilate must believe without perceptual evidence. Regardless of their pressures, Pilate resists taking action upon Christ's body with slippery, mutable, permeable language as his only verification.

Just as the pageant suggests language to be faulty evidence, it calls into question the veracity of bodily testimony. When Christ finally comes before the soldiers, Annas and Caiaphas, Caiaphas yells “We! Out! Stand may I not, so I stare! [Ahhh! Ah! I cannot stand up, I am so dumbfounded!]” (160) and the soldiers all claim to have lost control over their spears and banners. According to the Caiaphas, an invisible power has afflicted his body. While these actions would presumably have been played out onstage, Pilate claims to have not noticed a thing. He responds, “Say, renks [men], what ruth gars you roar [what concern causes you to yell] ? / Ye are wood [mad] or witless, I ween. / What ails you?” (162-164), “We! Are you fond, or your force fails you?” (167), and “Was it duly done thus indeed?” (172). Pilate’s questions invalidate the bodily experience of others: he suggests that the other men are insane or weak or foolish. Caiaphas emphasizes that something important has just happened, and the proof is that "ourselves we saw it" (173). However, either Pilate has not seen anything, or he cannot believe what he has seen. The soldiers, Annas, and Caiaphas all narrate the “evidence” of their bodies, which tells Pilate and the audience how they felt and what they experienced. The first soldier says that “it lay not in our lot these lances to let, / And this work that we have wrought, it was not our will” (182-183); the second soldier argues that “our strength might not stable them still, / They hielded for aught we could hold

[The banners fell despite how we held them] " (186-187); the third soldier asserts that "for all our force, in faith, did they fold, [despite all our strength, truly, (the banners) fell] / At this warlock [traitor] worship they would— / And us seemed, forsooth, it unsitting [and to us it seemed really unfitting] " (189-191). The scene is a trial in itself–Pilate cross-examines the soldiers and the high priests, asks if they are insane or if they are lying, and they respond with evidence of their physical experience. This dialogue could serve as stage direction to indicate when these extraordinary events begin onstage, but they are also another example of the problem of perceptual evidence: when is a report about bodily experience adequate testimony? How can an audience understand or "believe" what the bodies of the actors are doing? How can anyone really understand the bodily experience of another person? Pilate then scolds Soldier 2 by saying "For a whap so he whined and wheezed, / And yet no lash to the lurdan [rascal] was lent. / Foul fall you!" (198-200). The soldier, apparently, is *acting* like he was beaten, but Pilate did not witness any kind of physical blow to the soldier's body. Again, Pilate is being asked to believe the soldier's pain although there has been no evidence of violence. Pilate is challenged to believe the experience of pain without seeing real evidence or violence to cause it, just as the audience will soon be asked to "believe" a representation of Christ's pain that they know to be an enactment, and therefore a displacement of, the real thing.

In order to prove the bodily experience of the soldiers, Pilate then orders that the "wightest [most valiant] men unto were, / And the strongest these standards to steer, / Hither blithely bid them be boun [Tell the to get ready to come here merrily] " (213-215). Pilate requires more *bodies* as evidence to the powers of Christ–he assumes that if he brings fresh, strong bodies, they will disprove the weakness of the first batch of soldiers. The Beadle says

he will bring the strongest men, and when they arrive, he assures Pilate, "Lord, here are the biggest bernes [warriors] that bield [live, protect] in this burgh, / most stately and strong, if with strength they be strained. / Leve [believe] me, sir, I lie not, to look this land through, / They are mightiest men with manhood demeaned" (228-231). In performance, the Beadle's confident assertion of the men's physical prowess would presumably have been accompanied by the arrival of these mighty soldiers, whose presence constructs evidence for both Pilate and the viewing audience. However, Pilate immediately asks, "Wot thou well, or else has thou weened?" (232)–in other words, he asks, "do you know, or do you merely think it?" Pilate's question illuminates the central problematic within the Passion of the difference between thinking and knowing. While the audience and all the members of the cast onstage may be able to *see* the bodies of the soldiers, hear the words to describe them ("the biggest bernes...most stately and strong"), and think of or imagine their strength, Pilate articulates that perception and cognition are phenomenologically different from experience, or *knowing*.

As the scene continues, Pilate virtually performs the idea that in order to know, one must have a first-hand bodily experience. The stage direction after line 267 of the play indicates, "*And the Beadle shall recite after Annas 'Let Jesus be judged,'"* and the dialogue that follows is the only indication of the action embedded in this stage direction. Caiaphas says "We! Out! We are shent all for shame" (268), while Pilate exclaims "Such a sight was never yet seen. / Come sit. / My comfort was caught from me clean—/ I upstrit [stood up], I me might not abstain / To worship him in work and in wit" (271-275). Here the dialogue narrates the accompanying action (Pilate stands up, acts amazed, and spontaneously worships Christ), which both gives stage direction to actors from year to year of

performance and provides explanation to both a listening and viewing audience, and to readers, of the actions that have taken place. Suddenly, Pilate's doubt and uncertainty about the experience of the soldiers in the face of Christ's power boomerangs back toward him: Caiaphas cannot understand Pilate's physical response to Christ. Pilate, then, is forced to explain, to convince others of, his experience:

> I was past all my power, though I pained me and pined [I hurt myself and I struggled],
> But sirs, my speech well aspise [attend to]:
> Wightly [strongly] his ways let him wend [overthrow, turn me around],
> Thus my doom will duly devise,
> For I am feared him, in fait, to offend
> In sights. (278-284)

Pilate describes his pain, powerlessness, and fear. Transformed by physical and mental first-hand experience, Pilate now *knows* the power of Christ, and he struggles to convey this knowledge to the witnesses of his action. Pilate's experience outlines the relationship between body and mind in this play: the body structures experience, cognition, and perception, just as it conceals the physical phenomenon of pain.[53]

---

[53] In *The Phenomenological Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2008), Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi suggest that the body is "a principle of experience," that is "operative in every perception and every action" (135-137). According to phenomenological theories of embodiment, our ability to perceive and to act rely upon the fact that we have bodies, and our cognitive powers derive from our bodily experience. According to Gallagher and Zahavi, the body "is deeply implicated in our relation to the world, in our relation to others, and in our self-relation, and its analysis consequently proves crucial for our understanding of the mind-world relation, for our understanding of the relation between self and other, and for our understanding of the mind-body relation" (135). In accordance with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Gallagher and Zahavi suggest that we experience the world because we have bodies, and embodiment always exists in relation to the gaze of another person.

The first three-quarters of the Tilemakers' play is devoted to rehearsing the challenges of perceiving, thinking, and ultimately, knowing. Pilate first questions language as a viable form of evidence; he then interrogates the proof of actions, bodies, and testimony; finally, he performs the notion that true knowledge comes of bodily experience. Repeatedly, the pageant loops back to the question of how to know without being in a body, and reflects on the limitations of perception and cognition. However, Pilate, as the doubting witness, enacts the transformation from objective thinking and perceiving, to deeply personal knowing. This rehearsal prepares the audience for the ultimate challenge of the pageant and of the Passion sequence overall: to see, hear, and imagine the pain and power of Christ, without literally experiencing it. The play thus dialogically acknowledges the limitations of representation while simultaneously enacting the transformation from doubt to embodied belief.

The final quarter of the Tilemakers' pageant spotlights the vicious beating of Christ by four soldiers, a punishment that has been ordered by the ambivalent Pilate at the request of Annas and Caiaphas. Where does the play stand at the cusp of this most vicious beating of Christ? The audience has been commanded to silence, yet has also been indicted as witnesses of truth; thus, the play performatively manipulates an audience to be implicitly responsible in its mute witnessing of cruelty and injustice. Language alone, actions alone, and bodies alone have been cited by Pilate as insufficient proof. The pageant has foregrounded the problem of constructing belief from the outward trappings of auditory and visual perception, and from the fragility of rational thinking. With these ambiguities in mind, the climax of the pageant, the representation of the pain of Christ, begins.

Language in the play shrouds and obscures the figure of Christ. The structure of the play as a whole is characterized by a formidable alliterative stanza, with an *abab bcbc dccd* pattern, a structure that reveals acute and fastidious attention to the form, sound, and cadence of words. The play's opening cacophony of nagging, as the pandering prelates, Annas and Caiaphas, aim to convince a reluctant Pilate to punish Christ, give way to their harangue towards Pilate about the dangers of Christ's "sayings" and "words." The play progresses with a careful attention to and focus upon language and the power of speech, which sharply contrasts Christ's own silence, and escalates to the eventual physical and verbal beating of Christ by four soldiers.

When he first enters the stage, a Soldier provides an initial description of Christ's inability, or unwillingness, to talk: he says "For all the lord's language, his lips, sir, were lame; / For any speerings in that space no speech would he spell" (195). The superfluity of this language, and the excess that follows, mocks and contrasts the silence of Christ. Within the first third of the play, language is hushed as distracting, used for flattery, revealed as superfluity, and touted as a political and social danger. In fact, various characters recognize and formulate language quite clearly as a *tool*. The prelates fear that the words of Christ possess power as agents of change, while the language of one loquacious soldier maintains an equal yet opposing power to prevent action, to waste time.

Although Christ is silent throughout most of the scene, he interjects one speech in response to Pilate's command to "speak, and excuse thee if thou can" (299). Christ's self-defense, his only speech in this play, is *about* language.[54] He says:

[54] O'Connell suggests in *The Idolatrous Eye* that the "spiritual speech" of Christ "emerges from silence in contrast with the mockery, falsity, laughter, and simple triviality that have assailed his silent presence in the preceding pageants" (82).

Every man has a mouth that made is on mould [earth],
In weal [good fortune] and in woe to wield at his will;
If he govern it goodly like as God would,
For his spiritual speech him thar not to spill [slay, kill].
And what gome [man] so govern it ill,
Full unhendly [improperly] and ill shall he hap [he shall have great misfortune];
Of ilk tale thou talks us [the very same thing that you say to me] until
Thou account shall, thou can not escape. (300-307)

Christ's words introduce the sense that language is a tool or, potentially, a weapon. He gives speech a material referent by conflating the power of language with the physical tool of the "mouth" and suggests that like a weapon, the will of words can be "wielded." His speech also serves as a warning to those who misuse the power of language; those who govern their mouths "ill" will not be able to "escape" responsibility later. According to Jesus, with omniscience and all-hearing ears, God takes account of the tiny things, the individual value of each word. Language, according to the speech, is associated with exteriority, objectivity, and materiality.

Christ's focus on language as a kind of weapon serves as a harbinger of the way in which words work in tandem with action to produce horrific brutality in the scene that follows. The scene of the beating of Christ quite viscerally interlaces the dynamism of language with physical, moving, sound-producing elements of theatricality. When the Soldiers are first ordered to bring Christ, they are already *talking* about the actions that they intend to take upon his body. They describe their plans to "leap," "lead," "clout," "clap," "close," "lash," "lush," "lap," "rout," "rush," and "rap." This rash of alliterative verbiage is

characterized by a precise and vicious attention to outward action, to doing something *to* a material thing or object outside their own bodies; however, the unspoken object of their actions will be the vulnerable and permeable flesh of Christ. This banter is interesting because it is superfluous: it is almost as if the narration of the pageant spontaneously opens up the minds of the soldiers to share their violent thoughts with the audience, which further implicates the audience in the scheme that follows.[55] In terms of dramatic function, these verbs both introduce the intentions of the soldiers' public thought and prime the audience's imagination for the action that will follow.

The soldiers both repeat and enact various verbs during the scene of the beating of Christ. The York Realist maintains the alliterative stanza structure throughout the scene, but the energy of the language picks up speed especially in the action of the verbs with the rallying between the speakers:

4 Soldier: Let us **get off** his gear, God give him ill grace.

1 Soldier: They are tit off tite—lo, **take** there his trashes [rags].

3 Soldier: Now **knit** him in this cord.

2 Soldier: I am cant [lusty] in this case.

4 Soldier: He is **bound** fast— now **beat on** with bitter brashes [blows].

1 Soldier: Go on, **leap**, **harry** [lay waste], lordings, with lashes,

And **enforce** we—this faitour—to **flay** him.

2 Soldier: Let us **drive** to him derfly [violently], with dashes [violent impacts].

[55] In Chapter 7 of *Fictional Minds,* Alan Palmer suggests that thought and action are not distinct categories in assessing fictional minds. Instead, action works in tandem with language and thought to construct a framework of a character's mind. In the case of this dramatic example, the verbs function as thoughts, words, and future actions simultaneously and help to convey the intentions of the soldiers as they prepare for violent action.

All red with our routs we **array** him,

And **rent** him.

3 Soldier: For my part, I am **prest** for to pay him.

4 Soldier: Yea, send him sorry, **assay** him [put him to the test].

1 Soldier: **Take** him, that I have tome [time] for to **tent him** [probe, stretch].

2 Soldier: **Swing** to his swire [neck], till swiftly he sweat.

3 Soldier: **Sweat** may this swain for sweight [force] of our swaps.

4 Soldier: **Rush** on this ribald and him rathely **rehete** [eagerly attack].

1 Soldier: **Rehete** him, I rede [direct] you, with **routs and raps**.

2 Soldier: For all our noy [harassment], this niggard, he naps.

3 Soldier: We shall **waken him** with wind of our whips.

4 Soldier: Now **fling** to this flatterer with flaps.

1 Soldier: I shall heartily **hit on** his hips

And haunch.

2 Soldier: From our **skelps** [smacks] not scatheless he skips.

3 Soldier: Yet him list not lift up his lips

And pray us to have pity on his paunch. (347-371)

This set of lines begins with Soldier 4 and cycles through the soldiers in order, giving each an equal number of lines, thus providing a systematic structure for both their speech and the nasty work that they are doing. The verbs are primarily monosyllabic, which produces a staccato auditory effect when spoken aloud. Each line feels like a punch; each alliteration gives a sense of energetic, aggressive teamwork, and the soldiers themselves later refer to

their task as a "lake" or a game.[56] This series of lines stands out from the rest of *The Judgment* in that the language moves so quickly between speakers; the fast pace punctuates the action of the brutality and gives a beat and a rhythm to the violence. Drew Leder describes the way that language and bodies both maintain a double-sidedness: just as part of the body's identity as a material thing relies upon the incorporation of multiple invisible, "absent" processes and focal points, in language, "the signifier thus undergoes a focal disappearance as it is incorporated. The double-sidedness of the sign, both material thing and self-transcending intention, derives from its use by the double-sided lived body."[57] In this scene, just as the language of the soldiers is incorporated into the actions that they are taking upon the body of Christ, the body itself absorbs and retains the experience of pain silently, invisibly.

While the alliterative pattern produces this game-like, tag-team brutality from the very start of the scene, the intensity builds to a climax in the beginning of the second stanza, at which point the lines begin a type of pivot. In four particularly aggressive lines, the language links from speaker to speaker with the words "sweat" and "rehete" [attack], creating a roundness and intimacy that weaves their language and the actions of their bodies into a perfect unison of pain infliction. The words of the soldiers represent violent action, and their utterances contribute to the performance of action; their words function

---

[56] While in the previous pageant of the York cycle, *Christ Before Herod,* the "lake" or game is comedic, the potential laughter dissolves in the Soldiers' self-described "lake" in the Tilemakers' pageant; Michael O'Connell argues in "Mocker, Farce and *Risus Paschalis* in the York *Christ Before Herod,*" in *Ludus. Medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama, Vol. 6: Farce and Farcical Elements*, ed. Wim Hüsken, Konrad Schoell and Leif Søndergaard (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Publishers, 2002), 45-58. The Soldiers' excessive and mocking language provides a warped mirror to that of Herod in the previous pageant, and adds action to raise the dramatic stakes.

[57] Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 122.

imaginatively to construct and enhance the act of *doing* violence. In this scene of auditory, visual, and embodied beating, the sounds coordinate with actions, and the words as signifiers function as weapons; language is aligned with tangible, objective *things.*[58] The language of violence as a tool becomes spatially discrete in relation to the body: the words are hearable, shareable, and imaginatively associated with materiality. Thus, violence is associated with language, and with public, objective perception. On the other hand, the silence of Christ submerges *pain* into the subjective experience of the body.

While there are not specific stage directions to accompany the flogging of Christ, the dialogue lends some clues to the ways in which the stage may have been used in this scene. Pilate orders the soldiers to scourge Christ and to "then bring him before us as he was before" (339). The extended scene of torture commences, and for almost one hundred lines, only the four soldiers speak. At the end of the beating, Pilate asks the soldiers to "bring him before us as he blushes all blo [black and blue]" (432). These dialogue cues suggest that the soldiers take Christ elsewhere, away from the view of Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas, to carry out the scourging. The soldiers therefore take him away, and "bring him" back in front of the figures of authority. Several of the soldiers' lines further suggest that they occupy a separate stage space to carry out the beating. First, Soldier 4 worries that if "he die for this deed,

[58] In *Memory, Images, and The English Corpus Christi Drama,* Lerud suggests, "Unlike static images of painting and sculpture, these images illuminate themselves through speech" (49). Lerud contends that dialogue functions primarily to gloss or explicate the images on stage, not to develop anything or to reveal character (47-48). Although he characterizes language as one-dimensional "gloss" of the main event, visual spectacle, the play envisions and utilizes language not as ancillary, but as *primary*, in the construction of violence onstage.

undone are we all" (384-384). The soldiers are so carried away in their infliction of pain that they bring Christ to the brink of death: the soldier's need to interject a reminder for control suggests that the figures of authority are not present to manage their actions. Second, Soldier 2 thinks hopefully about how "Sir Pilate our prince our pride will we praise" (421). This line indicates that they will receive the approval of Pilate, when he is able to see the results of their work. Finally, the soldiers make a fuss about carrying Christ's body at the end of the scourging scene: Soldier 2 says, "We are cumbered his *corpus* for to carry, / Many wights on him wonder and wary- / Lo, his flesh all beflapped, that fat is" (429-431). The Soldiers, thus, are burdened by the weight of Christ's body as they carry it back to Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas. The detail of his "beflapped" flesh provides the audience with a directive cue as to how to perceive the body that they see before them; the realism of the actor's wounds may fall short, but the dialogue provides cues to guide the audience's visualization of the body.

How does the staging of the beating of Christ manipulate the dynamics of the pageant's performance of pain? Primarily, the removal of Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas as spectators places the burden of witnessing squarely upon the audience. Although Annas and Caiaphas displayed thirst for this painful punishment, the play projects the actual event toward consumption by the people in the audience. Thus, the audience is again implicated in the experience of Christ's pain in that they become privy to torture. The pain of Christ becomes an intimate experience for the audience members, who effectively replace Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas as silent witnesses.

The audience, therefore, directly faces the representation of Christ's body in pain. Claire Sponsler suggests that this type of scene “encourage[s] spectators to enjoy the attacks on Christ’s body as moments of undisguised sadistic delight in the inflicting of bodily pain.

In these scenes, which develop the torture of Christ's body into a long and grotesque drama focusing on whips, wounds, and bloodshed, a highly charged erotics is revealed as the nearly naked, brutalized body of Christ is scourged by other men's hands."[59] Sponsler's argument gestures towards the dialogic performance relationships that I here articulate, in that she assumes that the performance of pain, and the enactment of violence, manipulates the audience on a deeper level than a monologic transference of didactic Christian information. However, within the context of the play's continual questioning of belief, truth, and embodied knowledge, sadistic pleasure is not the targeted audience response. Rather, the play continually and performatively implicates the audience in the process of decision-making and silent witnessing, and though a community event, the pageant repeatedly reinforces the isolation and incommunicability of subjective experience.

Christ before Pilate (2): The Judgment presents us with a final mystery; about fifty lines are missing from the manuscript directly after the tortured Christ returns to Pilate. According to King and Beadle's footnote on the matter, "the incidents which are lacking probably included the call by the Jews to crucify Jesus, Pilate's offer that Jesus be the prisoner customarily released at the Passover, and the decision to release Barabas instead" (208). This conjecture jibes with the narrative convention of the gospels, which indicates the absence of this moment between Christ's beating and Pilate's final decision to crucify him. However, these missing lines produce an array of questions: What dialogue did these missing lines contain? Who spoke? What were the stage directions? Was the audience encouraged to participate in the cries to "Crucify him!" as they are in Catholic and Protestant Good Friday ritual? Why are these lines missing? This textual absence clearly produces an

[59] In O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*, 78.

interpretive gap even vaster than that which the critic encounters in the process of piecing together performance, audience response, and "meaning" from the archive of the York manuscript. However, as a part of the story that "everyone knows," and as framed by the existing narrative and performative work of the Tilemakers' pageant, Christ's body in pain and his impending death have become a *fait accompli*.

In the Tilemakers' pageant, Christ's body in pain is indeed central, yet the construction of his pain is built upon a set of frames. First, the narrative attention to Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate performs the creation of dramatic representations of real minds; their vanities, decisions, and caprices align the cruelty of their ultimate punishment of Christ to relatable human thought processes. In turn, the audience is implicated in these decisions as witnesses, silent judges, and implicit betrayers of Christ. Their participation in the unmaking and dis-membering of Christ simultaneously allows individuals to take part in the *making* of Christianity. Furthermore, Pilate's detached perception of others' pain, and his ultimate acquisition of knowledge about Christ's power through the embodied experience of pain, presents the essential question of how individual audience members will perceive Christ onstage. In some sense, the performance of doubt self-referentially acknowledges the limitations of representation, and admits, if you will, to the "not-real" status of theater. However, the story of Christ, to medieval Christians, *was* real. Thus, the performance both acknowledges the problems of *knowing* the pain of another person, and Christ in particular, and challenges audience members to examine their own subject positions as witnesses and believers.

While the Tilemakers' play grapples with the position of Christian belief, it also confronts the challenges and terrors of subjectivity. The play continually articulates the

difference between violence and pain: language, which is associated with materiality and tools, formulates violence, while pain may be characterized by silence, inwardness, and incommunicability. Language is a fixation, almost an obsession in the pageant: this focus foregrounds the incapacity of language to access the internal, subjective space of physical pain, and the limitations of language in general. Language in this play formulates and shapes imagination, memory, and the "realness" of the minds of the perpetrators of pain; however, it fails to explain, describe, or confront the body. The assumption often seems to be that the body of Christ in pain stands out in relief, that it is speaking its own language of suffering and endurance. However, the pageant's self-conscious enactment of the gap between perceiving and knowing illuminates the challenge of witnessing the pain of Christ; the pain of another always serves as a representation in that it is at a remove from the knowledge and understanding of embodied experience. While language may shape the public and shareable spectacle of *violence*, pain resides within the body, as an inward, subjective, and incommunicable human experience. The body in pain in this play reflects the central challenge to Christian faith: how may one believe the mysteries of the crucifixion and resurrection without tangible, embodied evidence? While the play does not solve this question, to fail in the suspension of disbelief aligns the doubting audience member with the villains of the Christian story. Therefore, the suffering body onstage urges witnesses, the audience members, to embrace Christian faith in the incomprehensibility of divine logic.

III. Brooking the Void: Language, Pain and Meaning in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*

The Protestant Reformation forbade the staging of the gruesome spectacle of Christ's torture and crucifixion. However, the early modern stage developed analogous representations of bodies in pain. For instance, stage productions of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* involved the hanging and stabbing of Horatio, Isabella's suicide, two acts of public punishment, Andrea's revengeful haunting, Hieronimo's biting of his own tongue, and the five final stabbings that comprise the violent action in the end of the play; this dramatic spectacle was rivaled in horror by the eight onstage murders, one severed hand, two severed heads, and two human-meat pies in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Both plays are often considered among the most popular of Elizabethan stage productions, despite frequent disparaging critique of their almost ridiculous displays of horror and bloodshed. *The Spanish Tragedy* is often considered "the first major play of the English Renaissance as well as its first great tragedy"[60] and was printed thirteen times between 1592 and 1633.[61] Soon thereafter, *Titus* ranked seventh in the number of quarto printings produced of Shakespeare's plays,[62] a fact that establishes its popularity, despite long-standing critical

[60] In *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 145.

[61] Number of printings according to ESTC records.

[62] G. Harold Metz, "Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 1977): 156.

agreement with Edward Ravenscroft's claim in his 1687 edition that the play is a "heap of Rubbish." [63]

Critical discourse has long focused on the blood, horror, and *violence* in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*. For instance, Molly Smith suggests that the spectacles of violence in *The Spanish Tragedy* relate to and comment upon the 6,160 hangings at Tyburn during Elizabeth's reign; Frank Ardonlino links Kyd's play to the 1572 St. Bartolomew's Day massacre in Paris and suggests that the character of Hieronimo is the representative of Protestant vengeance, while Bel-Imperia serves as an analogue to Queen Elizabeth's desire to destroy connections between royal lines and Catholicism; Lisa Dickson discusses the responses of readers and viewers to the arguably "gratuitous" violence in *Titus Andronicus*. However, in this chapter I would like to focus on the central representations of physical *pain* in these plays.[64] Just as in the York Tilemakers' Pageant, in these plays violence may be representable, public, and describable, but its result, physical pain, exists as an inherently subjective, internal, and indescribable experience.[65]

---

[63] In Alan Dessen, *Shakespeare and Performance: Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: University Press, 1989), 7.

[64] While critical discourse has focused on the violence in *Titus Andronicus*, sexualized and revengeful violence in particular, little work as focused on the function of *pain* in the play. Tzachi Zamir begins to broach the issue in her article "Wooden Subjects," *New Literary History* 39:2 (Spring 2008): 277-300, by linking pain to botanical figures in the play. I agree with Zamir's claim that the play "is not a 'revenge tragedy' or an 'early tragedy' that would lead to the 'mature work.' It is a tragedy about tragedy. The subjection of spectacles of the literal and figurative consumption of pain to an inadequate channeling into language resolves in a sense of discomfort among those members of the audience who would dismiss this play as tasteless and would relish the smoother tragic effect of the later work" (281).

[65] As Elaine Scarry writes in *The Body in Pain*, "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (4). I am also leaning on Arendt's discussion of "public" as something that "can be seen and heard by

Hannah Ardent describes the experience of physical pain as "the most intense feeling we know," yet she suggests that pain is

> at the same time the most private and least communicable of all. Not only is it perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit for public appearance, it actually deprives us of our feeling for reality…There seems to be no bridge from the most radical subjectivity, in which I am no longer 'recognizable,' to the outer world of life. Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience between life as 'being among men' (*inter homines esse)* and death, is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all.[66]

However, late Medieval and early modern drama did indeed attempt to represent pain onstage for the express purposes of trying to give shape to and interject into public discourse the problem of the human condition of pain. While in the first half of the sixteenth century the stage traditionally functioned as a place to publicly enact and witness the exquisite pain of Christ, after the iconoclastic movements of the late sixteenth century, staged pain draws focus to the bodies of moral, common people. In the early modern plays, much as in the medieval pageants, the experience of pain quite palpably evades verbal signification; however, when detached from the set of signifiers associated with Christ's transcendent experience, the body in pain becomes almost absurd in its dissociation from symbolic order. Using the voids between language, visual spectacle, and the body in pain in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, I explore the ways in which language re-describes, manipulates, or disguises the meaning of physical pain in each play. Ultimately, the plays' compulsive re-telling of the moments of violence reveals both the vulnerabilities of

---

everybody and has the widest possible publicity…something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves constitutes reality" (50).

[66] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence.* (New York: Harcourt, 1969), 50-51.

language and the impossibility of adequately signifying the pain that humans inflict upon one another.

If we consider each play a narrative of human pain, both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* begin in medias res. Just as the Ghost of Andrea immediately alerts the audience to the scenes of bloody battle that occurred prior to the opening of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Titus returns to Rome in the first scene of Shakespeare's play carrying evidence, the coffins of his sons, of similar martial violence. Although both plays attempt to cloak the horrors and pain of war in the language of "valor" and "honor," the beginnings of these stories produce a problem: the inflictions of pain and the acts of violence within each play are rooted in origins that an audience cannot see, the battlefields of unstaged wars. Thus, the origin of pain in each play precedes onstage action and destabilizes any originary point of meaning to that pain within the narrative. Likewise, both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus* close with verbal commands that extend violence, and the infliction of pain, well beyond the borders of the stage. These two revenge tragedies leave the narrative open at both beginning and end; their stories tell of a continuum of human pain, rather than of isolated, stable events that may be cleanly rationalized and effectively concluded.

These open-ended narratives of pain function within a matrix of specifically Protestant problems. Early modern Protestant theology determines the human condition to be always, already in a state of decay, rotten and miserable; in essence, the human condition is a state of pain. While the post-Reformation's iconoclastic work denigrated images, ceremonies, and bodies in favor of "the Word," inspired by the logophilia of Calvin and Luther, what happens when language actually attempts to explain and account for the undeniable reality of human pain? How does an individual, always uncertain if he or she is

one of the "elect," communicate and ask for divine help when confronted with the realities of a fragile body? How does one know that "the Word" is effectively communicating? *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* produce provocative confrontation between the body in pain and the word, confrontation that reveals the problems of doubt, fear, and frustration when language, abstract and unstable, becomes the primary tool with which to acknowledge and understand the human condition of pain.

In *The Culture of Pain,* David Morris suggests that pain and its representation changes as a result of cultural and historical context. Central to his argument is that "pain is always historical- always reshaped by a particular time, place, culture, and individual psyche."[67] While Morris's work provides a vast and varied discussion of pain as a vacillating socio-economic, historic, religious, literary, and gendered experience, his analysis is a-historical in that it fails to establish a chronology and does not adequately analyze or interpret any particular time or place in the history of pain. Late medieval and early modern drama provides a ripe and important place to consider how the representation of pain both reflects cultural and religious ideology, and works to shape perceptions about the body as a contested site of tension between earthly experience and aspirations about or fear of the afterlife. In the early modern imagination, surviving terrestrial pain was ancillary to the possibilities of pain after death.

As Eamon Duffy contends, medieval Catholicism held an incredibly strong hold over the imagination and loyalty of people in England "up to the very moment of the

---

[67] David Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 6.

Reformation" and beyond.[68] Purgatory and the cult of the dead *were* defining features of human community, and shaped the way that people understood "what it was to be human."[69] Not only were people deeply invested in the activities of praying for and offering indulgences to relieve their loved ones in the pains of Purgatory, but the Catholic tradition "stressed the spiritual value of vivid mental imaginings of the events of the life of Christ, especially his Passion."[70] The way that people *knew* Christ, was to contemplate, memorialize, and understand his body in pain; Christians were supposed to both believe (not believing enough could result in the Host appearing as mangled flesh, rather than the bread of Heaven) and relate to Jesus as a "brother" through the experience of pain. So even if the wounds of Christ disturbed, they also were the only pathway to grace.[71] Entrenched in the sixteenth-century understanding of the human condition was the idea that understanding and knowing pain was the route to heaven, whether by way of martyrdom and sainthood for a blessed few, or by way of the pains of Purgatory for most.

The Corpus Christi plays sustained a direct and focused attention on their namesake, "the body of Christ." The Passion sequences demonstrate and elaborate upon the incredible pain of the crucifixion through physical representation and verbal repetition. Hence, theater-goers participated in an embodied depiction of pain as it related to Christian life: the dramatic stories were supposed to be "true" because they were Biblical, and the representation of Christ in pain produced a tangible, physical body upon which to meditate

---

[68] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 4.

[69] Ibid., 8.

[70] Ibid., 19.

[71] Ibid., 108.

about the role of pain in each individual's salvation.[72] The abject body had an explicit purpose in this theater: it signified Christ's sacrifice and God's love for humanity, and supplied proof of the physical connection between God and man—both have bodies that feel and hurt.

As Michael O'Connell argues in "*King Lear* and the Summons of Death," Shakespeare and his early modern contemporaries, including Lyly, Greene, Peele and Kyd, were all born in time "to have experienced the final performances of the great cycles of the fifteenth-century Corpus Christi and Whitsuntide plays," although Shakespeare would have been most likely to have seen the cycle plays because of his "generational and geographic positioning."[73] O'Connell contends that although ecclesiastical authorities censored religious drama in the second half of the sixteenth century, "they remained a cultural memory of some force in an England that still represented varieties of religious understanding and belief."[74] The boundaries between "medieval" and "early modern," then, become unclear, as do conceptions of pre- and post-Reformation dramatic experience. Audiences at a production of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* or Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* may very well have also witnessed late productions of the cycle plays, earlier in Elizabeth's reign. While the *representations* of pain changed as a result of iconoclasm and differences in the material and cultural place of dramatic theater in England, these representations may be

---

[72] In *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*, Jody Enders argues that in fact *all* medieval drama "not only reinforced belief but created it as it unfolded in real time" (xxii).

[73] Michael O'Connell, "*King Lear* and the Summons of Death." In *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages.* Ed. Curtis Perry and John Watkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 199.

[74] Ibid., 201.

understood within a continuum of belief, rather than as distinct entities severed from one another by political and theological strife.[75]

A casual survey of early modern drama could suggest that the theater was *filled* with bloody representations of pain that parallel that of Christ in the cycle plays. However, although Elizabethan tragedy does not shy away from gruesome bodily damage, as evidenced by spectacles like the bloodbath at the end of *Hamlet*, or the descriptions of carnage in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, there is a difference between these moments of violence and the more rare representation of human bodies living through physical pain. In Elizabethan revenge tragedy, the body in pain shifts as a stage presence from a concrete, obvious object of horror to an abstract and displaced image that invokes the *mind* to *imagine* pain and horror. In Kyd, the play opens and closes with the figure of Andrea, a dead soldier whose "death made passage through [his] wounds" before the play begins. The repetitive descriptions within the play of his moment of death, and the later inefficacies of Hieronimo's words to accurately describe or express his grief, create an economy of linguistic failure within the play. The violent spectacle of Horatio's murdered body, and its return in the end of *The Spanish Tragedy* as an obvious reminder of the central moment of violence as a justification for revenge, marks the concrete, crucifixion-like image of the body in pain. To see the violence occur is to know that it happened, while language alone remains an unstable means of establishing or conveying truth. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in fact shifts the infliction of Lavinia's pain from the stage; her rape and

[75] While I agree with David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) that early modern drama is deeply indebted to medieval drama, as I have stated previously, I don't believe that there was a clear break between the periods. Instead of "indebtedness" between medieval and Renaissance drama, in general I would like to propose the consideration of dramatic forms as transitions along a continuum.

mutilation occur off-stage, and the moment is masked and manipulated by the language used to describe the event. However, Lavinia's body returns to haunt the stage as an after-image of the violent moment. [76] The audience is asked to imagine the moment of the infliction of pain through language and metaphor but also through the "evidence" of her body to prove it.

These bleeding, suffering, fragmented bodies onstage literalize a Post-Reformation Protestant theology that emphasizes the always, already decaying, rotten and fallen state of humankind. In *The Institutes of Christian Religion,* John Calvin insists repeatedly that "man is so full of misery"[77], unjust, devious, stupid, and impure and "putrid"[78], "rotten to the core and so wretched"[79]. In fact, "even the qualities in us which seem most admirable are worlds away from God's purity and can never match it."[80] Further, human depravity and suffering are our fault, because we must continually repent the sins of Adam[81]; while once humans were made in the image of God, after the Fall, all that was left was an "ugly deformity."[82] However, Calvin also acknowledges the pain inherent in human existence, and attempts to compensate for its seeming arbitrariness. He says, "the tragedies which occur in this life are countless, and death comes in many guises. The body alone can harbour diseases galore, so

---

[76] In his article "'The Dark and Vicious Place': The Location of Sexual Transgression and its Punishment on the Early Modern English Stage," *Parergon* 22.1 (2005), Richard Madelaine also likens Titus's choice to keep Lavinia around for the bloodletting scene to Hieronimo keeping Horatio's body to use during his revenge play-within-a-play (175).

[77] John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion,* eds. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 1.1.

[78] Ibid., 1.2.

[79] Ibid., 1.3.

[80] Ibid., 1.2.

[81] Ibid., 15.1.

[82] Ibid., 15.4.

that each man carries destruction with him, and life is interwoven with death…." He cites only several of the infinite horrific things that can pierce, damage, and destroy the human body: heat, ships, horses, sharp tools, wild animals, fire, weather, poison, robbery. However, he says, "of course, such things don't happen very often and never all at once!".[83] This statement, so contrary to the turns of events illuminated in the dramatic representations of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, is then folded into Calvin's assertion that the horrors and pains of life are *not* random, but are predestined and controlled by God.

Similarly, Martin Luther says "so many knaves that must daily be hanged, beheaded, broken upon the wheel, but from disobedience…because they will not submit to discipline in kindness so that, by the punishment of God, they bring it about that we behold their misfortune and grief? For it seldom happens that such perverse people die a natural or timely death. But the godly and obedient have this blessing, that they live in long and pleasant quietness and see their children's children…to the third and fourth generation."[84] Luther also acknowledges a list of painful things that happen to humans: "poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all the agonizing misery and heartache of which there is such an unnumbered multitude on the earth."[85] While he attributes these horrors to the devil, he says "there is nothing for us to do upon earth but to pray against this arch enemy without ceasing."[86] Thus, comfort in Luther comes in the form of language: communicating to God is the most effective way to prevent and to survive the "unnumbered multitude" of pains on earth.

---

[83] Ibid., 17.10.

[84] Martin Luther, *Collected Works of Martin Luther* (Bibliobazaar, 2007), 48.

[85] Ibid., 126.

[86] Ibid., 126.

The Thirty-nine Articles of 1571 re-articulate and indoctrinate the positions, as prefaced by the theologies of both Calvin and Luther, that human beings are inherently corrupt, that the world is a place of decay, and that the Word is the means by which to alleviate pains of human existence and to undertake a Christian existence. Article Nine suggests that "whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature enclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation." This passage suggests that "the flesh" itself deserves punishment and wrath—as a condition of living in the world, a body will feel pain. However, despite this human condition of doom, the Articles assert that the word, or "Holy Scripture" "containeth all things necessary to salvation" (Article Six). Articles Thirty-Five and Thirty-Six refer to the authority of other texts: the Articles establish the reissued *Book of Homilies* and the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer* as the specific texts that contain "all things necessary" in Christian prayer. Following the example of Luther, the Articles also demonstrate the failure of actions, or works, to find favor with God: just as Luther proclaims that "there is no forgiveness" and "no holiness" that comes from works, Article Ten determines that "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God…." While good works no longer please God, the language of prayer becomes critical. The official position of the Church of England repeatedly claims the importance of "a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding, both of the readers and the hearers,"[87] and the directness of confession and

[87] Preface, *The Book of Common Prayer* (1559).

prayer to God without the intermediary of an ecclesiastical figure. This doctrinal position situates language, or the Word, as the primary avenue by which to live as a "chosen" Christian.

While the Church of England presumably takes the power of religion out of the hands of the Pope, and puts the agency of language into the spiritual lives of the English people, the relationship between "chosen" Christians, language, and salvation, leaves the early modern individual in a tenuous position of doubt. First, while the Word is central to faith in post-Reformation Protestantism, that Word must be carefully chosen. The doctrinal position of the Protestant Church produces, and reproduces a template to deem which words are appropriate and effective to use in relation to God. The "Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church, and the Administration of the Sacraments" (1559), found at the beginning of the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer*, declares at *both* the beginning and end that the "said book" deems "void and of none effect" any sacraments, rites, or ceremonies that are not included in the book. It also declares that any religious leader who "shall preach, declare, or speak anything in the derogation or depraving of the said book or anything therein contained…. Shall be lawfully convicted."[88] Further, if "any person or persons whatsoever after the said Feast of the Nativity of Saint John Baptist next coming, shall in any interludes, plays, songs, rhymes, or by other open words, declare or speak anything therein contained or any part thereof, or shall by open fact, deed, or by open threatenings compel" a religious leader to say anything not contained in the book, they would also "be lawfully convicted."[89] Just as Luther's *Large Catechism* emphasizes the need

[88] *The Book of Common Prayer,* 7.

[89] Ibid., 8.

for the reader to "repeat word for word"[90] when reciting prayer, this preface displays a pervasive attention to the kinds of words that *do not* count as effective, appropriate, or pious means of communication with God. In addition, the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* contains chapters on "How the Psalter is Appointed to Be Read" and "How the Rest of Holy Scripture Is Appointed to Be Read"—even if the words are right, there is a certain way, a method, by which to read them. While *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Thirty-Nine Articles are intended as guidelines for the kinds of speech acts that produce effect, depending on one's position on the continuum of belief, the question may arise: what if my prayer, my words, don't work?

Calvin addresses this doubt, and suggests that "[s]ome sincere people feel distressed, because they cannot find clear proof ready to hand to silence the infidels who oppose the Word of God with impunity. They forget that the Spirit is called a pledge and seal to confirm the faith of the godly because until he enlightens their minds, they are tossed about on a sea of doubts" (7.4). He says, though, that "nothing could be more pathetic than the thought of man at the mercy of unpredictable elements, and if it were true, God's particular goodness towards each individual would be seriously damaged" (16.3). Everything, even Satan, is under the control of God. In fact, "it would be absurd to believe that anything happens without God's ordination, because it would happen at random" (16.8). While God's omnipotence does provide comfort to a certain extent, it only does so for "the elect." Just as Calvin asserts that "God bestows…priceless privilege only on his elect, whom he sets apart from the rest of mankind" (7.5), the Thirty-Nine Articles differentiates between the chosen and everyone else. Article Seventeen suggests that God "has constantly decreed by his

[90] Luther, 19.

counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen (in Christ) out of mankind, and to bring them (by Christ) to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour…." The Articles predict a horrific doom for those who are not "chosen" by God: "for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into recklessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation" (Article Nineteen). The Articles emphasize that Purgatory and pardons are illegitimate, and that "the sacrifices of masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priests did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits" (Article Thirty-One). Thus, some people are not chosen, but their works do not matter and their hope for salvation through the pains of Purgatory is eliminated.[91] For those not among the "chosen," the pains of life and the human condition as a putrid mass of rotten flesh is only the beginning: the pains of Hell become the only option for the afterlife once Purgatory is falsified by Protestant doctrine.

[91] Although it was eliminated from later versions, the 1553 Articles included a clause that directly confronted and delegitimized the idea that "all men, be they never so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pains for their sins a certain time appointed by God's justice" (Article 42). In other words, every individual is explicitly *not* destined for heaven; in fact, according to this standpoint, a great many people would in fact go to hell. As D.P. Walker discusses in *The Decline of Hell*, before the Reformation, hell was a place for only the most wicked, perverse, and evil souls; however, with the elimination of Purgatory, it became a question as to *how* wicked one had to be to go to hell, and *how* perfect to go to heaven. Walker cites Marie Huber's 1707 argument that "men are so psychologically constituted that they do not in fact fear threats of disproportionate punishment because they are unable to believe in them" (42). I do not suggest that early moderns did not fear hell; in fact it seems that the marginally bad, those who may suspect they are not "chosen," would have a lot more pain to fear when Purgatory was no longer an imagined option.

In the discussion that follows, I attempt to enter the long critical discussion of early modern tragedy in relation to the state of religion in early modern England. In particular, my analysis has been informed by the work of Huston Diehl, who argues that Elizabethan and Jacobean drama actively demonstrates a Protestant aesthetic. She suggests that revenge tragedy, and in particular the play-within-a-play, engages audiences in a process of questioning visible signs, and "calls attention to a dangerous and fraudulent kind of theatricality—a Catholic theatricality—in order to demystify and discredit it."[92] While I agree that revenge tragedy does indeed pay conspicuous attention to the nature of signs, I am not convinced that early modern theater may be categorized so cleanly as Protestant. I wonder if Elizabethan tragedy may be read through the lens of doubt, uncertainty, or in-betweenness, in terms of belief. Further, in my discussion, the body in pain, once the paradigmatic sign of Christian redemption, becomes an unstable, unsignifiable presence onstage. In fact, the body in pain becomes anything *but* transcendent: it is unequivocally fragile, human, and relatable to any individual audience member's experience of pain in the world.

I also do not suggest that *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* display nostalgia for a Catholic past. In contrast to Louis Montrose's argument, I do not believe that theater "compensates" for a loss of ritualistic magic in early modern life. Rather, it seems, these plays question and experiment with the possibility of Calvin's unthinkable: that pain upon innumerable pain can and does happen at once to individuals. In these scenarios, the absence of a signifiable God, the failure of language to effect change in this pain, and the

[92] See Diehl's fourth chapter, "Rehearsing the Eucharistic Controversies: The Revenge Tragedies," in *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 119.

ultimate meaningless of the bodies themselves leave a palpable void in the magic. Although the people within the plays hope for, and express belief in, a transformative magic to provide comfort to the reality of bodies in pain, that magic is most definitely empty. In his discussion of *King Lear* in *Shakespearean Negotiations,* Stephen Greenblatt suggests that demonic possession in the play is "marked out for audiences as theatrical fraud," demonstrating for the audience that rituals and beliefs "are no longer efficacious…have been emptied out."[93] Ultimately, he argues that the play suggests that "there is no saving institution, purged of theater," and therefore the dramatic act reemphasizes the need for ceremonies and a desire for the theatrical. I do not consider the language, bodies, or ineffective actions in *Titus* and *The Spanish Tragedy* to be emptied out to show "theatrical fraud," as Greenblatt describes in *Lear.* At some level it seems that theater intentionally comments on theatricality. However, these plays are stories that people want to tell, and want to see repeatedly, and so I consider the narratives of pain onstage with a focus on what the plays say and do about the meaning of inhabiting and comprehending a fragile, vulnerable body in the world.

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* experiments with the problems of knowing, justifying, and rationalizing pain, both in the world and in the afterlife. The play presents a tragic world of destabilized meaning. There is not a clear sense of a Christian path to the afterlife, nor is there a viable means to communicate and understand the pain of the human condition with language alone. In a world where the central representational paradigm to understand pain, Christ, becomes re-embodied through the abstractions of language, how can people imagine and understand pain? Without the idea of Purgatory as a mediating place

[93] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 119.

between the glory of heaven and the agonies of hell, how could people imagine the afterlife? The play asks what we can *do* to understand and "brook" the divides between language and knowing, life and the afterlife, justice and pain.

The first act of *The Spanish Tragedy* displays a certain attention to evidence, or lack thereof, of dead bodies. First, Andrea appears to the audience as a ghost, and recounts his experience of the afterlife with classical imagery.[94] While the stage directions do not indicate the appearance of Andrea specifically, he gives the audience the verbal prequel to his pain and tells us that he has died in battle, fighting "Till life to death made passage through my wounds" (1.1.17). Here, wounds become windows, or a "passage" between life and death, yet these fatal lacerations are elided by the reappearance of Andrea as a speaking, moving, whole body. The pain of his death slips under the radar, as the audience witnesses the re-substantiated form of this wounded soldier recounting his marvelous encounter with the three-forked paths towards eternal life after death. Significantly, *two* of the three paths that Andrea describes lead to places of pain; the martial fields designated for soldiers are home to Hector, who "lives in lasting pain," while the path to "deepest hell" leads to a horrific place:

> where bloody Furies shake their whips of steel,
> And poor Ixion turns an endless wheel.
> Where usurers are choked with melting gold,
> And wantons are embraced with ugly snakes,
> And murderers groan with never-killing wounds,
> And perjured wights scalded in boiling lead….

[94] Many critics, from Howard Baker in his article "Ghosts and Guides: Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and the Tragedy" *Modern Philology* 33:1 (Aug. 1935): 27-35, to the more contemporary Foucaultian argument of Molly Smith in her article ""The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy,*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 32:2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring 1992): 217-232, have discussed Kyd's play in relation to the Senecan model.

1.1.65-70

Andrea's description of hell, though formulated through classical imagery, intersects with Christian notions of the indescribable, eternal pain possible in the afterlife. In this description, people in hell are punished according to their mortal crimes, and the punishment itself functions as an "endless wheel," a never-ending and "never-killing" cycle. The abject body of Andrea sends a mixed signal. While he returns to haunt the stage as he waits for a final judgment from Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth, he is poised in a miraculously re-created whole body, awaiting a two-in-three chance of spending the rest of eternity in pain. Andrea serves as a reflection of the position of the body in pain onstage in relation to a Christian view of the afterlife in 1588. Just as the iconoclastic movements of the mid-to-late sixteenth century removed the wounds of Christ as a viable representational experience for English audiences, the wounds of Andrea are similarly invisible, rendered to the imagination only through verbal representation and metaphor. As opposed to the specific purpose of the abject body in the Christian theater of the cycle plays to elicit contemplation of and to ensure confidence about the humanity and compassion of God, the body of Andrea seems to do just the opposite. His liminal position between life and death raises doubt about the definitive positions of souls in the afterlife, and his eventual ability to choose the fates of the damned in the end of the play reemphasizes the cruelty of humans, rather than the justice and compassion of God.

As Scott McMillan has noted, the narration of battle is recounted *five* more times after Andrea's initial description.[95] While McMillan suggests that "Kyd's interest centers on

[95] Scott McMillan, "The Figure of Silence in the *Spanish Tragedy,*" *ELH* 39:1 (Mar. 1972): 27-48.

the enactment of the speeches rather than on discrepancies in their content",[96] it seems that the very action of *repeating* is crucial to the play's formulation of the circumstances of Andrea's death. In the second scene, the Viceroy of Portugal demands to know the fate of "the carcase" of his son, Balthazar, and is confronted with conflicting accounts. The audience has already seen the living body of Balthazar in the previous scene, but his father must rely on the reports from his men, Alexandro and Villuppo. Although Alexandro argues that "the Prince survives" (1.3.43), Villuppo recounts an "eyewitness" report of the young man's death. He presents extensive ocular evidence: "Then hear that truth which these mine eyes have seen…Among the rest I saw him hand to hand / In single fight…I saw them drag [the body] in to the Spanish tents" (1.3.59-75). Villuppo conflates modes of perception by asking the King to "hear" what he has "seen," and his words, known by the audience to be a lie, totally discredit the value of his report. Ultimately, the audience learns to distrust the perception, or verbal reports of perceptions, of others, which come into direct conflict with the "evidence" of the body of Balthazar onstage.

Symmetrically, Bel-Imperia craves news about "Don Andrea's carcass" (1.4.31). First she desires the story of his last battle; she has a kind of lust for an account of Andrea's death but then needs further evidence: if his body has been "lost," how can she know what really happened? As a displaced form of material evidence, Horatio gives Bel-Imperia her lover's scarf, along with the story of what he "saw." Complaining of the difficult task of re-telling, Horatio recounts the following story:

> When both our armies were enjoined in fight,
> Your worthy chavalier amid the thick'st,
> For glorious cause still aiming at the fairest,
> Was at the last by young Don Balthazar

[96] Ibid., 31.

> Encountered hand to hand. Their fight was long,
> Their hearts were great, their clamors menacing,
> Their strength alike, their strokes both dangerous.
> But wrathful Nemesis, that wicked power,
> Envying at Andrea's praise and worth,
> Cut short his life to end his praise and worth.
> She, she herself, disguised in armor's mask…
> Brought in a fresh supply of halberdiers,
> Which paunched his horse and dinged him to the ground.
> Then young Don Balthazar with ruthless rage,
> Taking advantage of his foe's distress,
> Did finish what his halberdiers begun,
> And left not till Andrea's life was done.
>
> 1.4.9-26

Rather than dwelling on the physicality of the "carcass" itself, Horatio shrouds the pain and ultimate death of Andrea in glorious language. His body's suffering takes on the "glorious cause" of love, or victory, while the physicality of the hand-to-hand combat is elided by the singularity of the warrior's great "heart." In this case, rather than a heart that will too soon stop beating, Horatio references this body part to describe his friend's valor and bravery. Further, Horatio's speech displaces the extreme brutality that human beings inflict upon one another by interjecting the figure of Nemesis: her supernatural wrath becomes the ultimate cause of Andrea's suffering and death, which takes the brunt of the blame off of mortal cruelty.

Ultimately, Bel-Imperia takes Horatio's word for it, and his description of Andrea's death becomes the gateway to their budding romance. Again, the audience enjoys a privileged position of perception: they have also seen Andrea onstage, dead, but still haunting the scene. However, while his missing body creates a void in Bel-Imperia's mourning, he inhabits a very real place on stage as an observer and ultimately, presumably, as an arbiter of justice in the play. According to the stage directions, the "Ghost of Andrea" appears to the audience as a whole, human form, seemingly repaired from the *stories* of the

violence inflicted upon his body. While Andrea describes his eyewitness account of "deepest hell, / Where bloody Furies shake their whips of steel, / And poor Ixion turns an endless wheel," (1.1.64-71), his own post-death body has been spared a final fate as he awaits the outcome of earthly justice. In terms of the material damage to his body, while the story that Horatio tells is only of glory, strength and courage, the story of the General a scene before gives more graphic description of the "realities" of war:

> On every side drop captains to the ground,
> And soldiers, some ill-maimed, some slain out-right.
> Here falls a body scindered from his head,
> There legs and arms lie bleeding on the grass,
> Mingled with weapons and unbowelled steeds,
> That scattering overspread the purple plain.
> 1.2.56-62

This horrific imagery of bodies ripped and fragmented across the battlefield conflicts with both the glorious and heroic stories, as told for Bel-Imperia by Horatio and as told by the resurrected, reconstituted body of Andrea as a ghost. The possibility of his wounded and fragmented body is elided by the re-description of horror by Horatio and by Andrea's return as a whole body, a re-created physical and imagined version of his former self.

In fact, the staged reconstruction of Andrea's dead body makes it possible for the audience to forget, or ignore, any imagery of a gory "carcass." As Elaine Scarry argues in *The Body in Pain*, the fact that war, which is by nature about *injuring*, "should so often be described as though *injuring were absent* from or, at most, secondary to its structure, again indicates the ease with which our descriptive powers break down in the presence of a concussive occurrence…"[97] The play re-describes war as glory, and re-assembles a broken body, which not only suggests the imprecision of language but also the human impulse to

[97] *The Body in Pain*, 278.

structure the body in pain within an imagined and fantastic framework.[98] Similarly, to Bel-Imperia, Andrea does not seem dead but reconfigured in some kind of powerful, heroic afterlife. However, Bel-Imperia is able to transfer her love so easily from a dead man to a living one perhaps because she is able to simply replace the love she feels into a kind of body-double for Andrea: Horatio. To Bel-Imperia, Horatio becomes a replacement for the lost, ravaged body of Andrea, and stands in for the missing "corpse" as the object of her affection. But the subsequent violent spectacle of Horatio's murder later provides a reflection to give shape to Andrea's offstage death. While Andrea's death and the ruin of his body existed only in the possibility of language to describe it, in Horatio, the audience can *see* what the body in pain looks like, and can witness the outcome of horrific loss.

As a reflection of the unstaged, re-described inflictions of pain to the body of Andrea, the central moment of violence and physical pain in *The Spanish Tragedy* occurs with the hanging and stabbing of Horatio. As Arthur Kinney notes in his introduction to the play, "The chief visual spectacle at the play's center is the dead Horatio, hanged and stabbed in the side by enemies he once thought his friends: a kind of crucifix… " [99] This crucifix-like enactment forms the temporal and emotional center of the play, and functions as the

---

[98] In *The Body in Pain,* Elaine Scarry suggests that "if one imagines one human being seeing another human being in pain, one human being perceiving in another discomfort and in the same moment wishing the other to be relieved of the discomfort, something in that fraction of a second is occurring inside the first person's brain involving the complex action of many neurons that is, importantly, not just a perception of an actuality (the second person's pain) but an alteration of that actuality" (289). Thus, in every moment of witnessing, or imagining pain, the brain enacts a necessary displacement between real feeling and perceived feeling. *The Spanish Tragedy* presents a multi-layered example of this problem: not only do the characters within the fictionalized play struggle to bridge the gap between bodily reality and imagination, but the metatheatricality of the play's final scene presents the displacement between an audience (or a community) and the experiences of pain and loss.

[99] Arthur Kinney's introduction to *The Spanish Tragedy* in *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 146.

pivot between the play's beginning, in which the violence of past war-related bloodshed is related through verbal imagery, and the second half of the play, in which violence becomes present, explicit, enacted, and mutated from the original "valor" of military battle.

Again, as a kind of warped reflection of the story of Andrea's death, the scene of Horatio's stabbing and hanging produces imagery of an alternative battlefield, that of sexual conquest. In sharp contrast to the "glory" of the martial fields of Andrea's death, Horatio and Bel-imperia meet in the hidden space of a bower. The enclosed spaces of the early modern stage, as Richard Madelaine discusses, are places of sexual transgression and murder, and often implicate the audience as witnesses to these crimes because the space of the bower, the closet and the bedchamber are all closed off, but still present onstage. Madelaine discusses the bower where Horatio and Bel-Imperia meet for a secret love tryst in *The Spanish Tragedy* as one of these "enclosed spaces." The bower scene, he says, is sexy and dark (as evidenced by Pedrigano's torch), and creates a space in which illicit passion becomes possible in a secret and confined space.[100] The bower presents a space within which the lovers can explore their desire for one another, and within which murder transforms from glorious victory on a battlefield to a private, secret, and shameful act. The language of Horatio and Bel-Imperia elicits a parallel to the battlefield. They call their flirtation their "wars," their kisses become "dart[s]" and Bel-imperia claims to use her "twining arms" to "gain the glory of the field" against her lover. When the moment of violence occurs, Horatio is taken by surprise, and as he hangs from the arbor he can only ask "What, will you murder me?" before he is stabbed. His compromised position, his inability to fight back, and his helpless question highlight the lack of valor and justice in his death.

[100] Madelaine, "'The dark and vicious place.'"

While Bel-imperia loses two lovers within two acts of the play, it is the death of Horatio that drives her to revenge, just as it unhinges Hieronimo and Isabella. Although Andrea waits in the wings in hopes of Revenge for his own death, it is Horatio's death, visible, enacted and "real," that sparks revenge in the characters within the play. Hieronimo's endless lamentation, Isabella's lunacy and suicide, and Bel-imperia's wrath seem to illuminate the limitations of human beings' ability to rationalize the pain of the human condition, and death itself. Andrea's death created temporary distress. Bel-imperia, for example, was able to transfer her love to Horatio by proxy. However, Andrea's dead body has been re-substantiated into the form of heroic imagined afterlife, and his death may be justified in the context of war. Although Andrea experienced pain and suffered death, the absence of this moment onstage as an embodied, shareable fact displaces the event of his death from an adequate response to it. Horatio is able to gloss the horrors of war, and Bel-Imperia transfers her love from one man to another because Andrea's body in pain exists only as it can be imagined through language. However, Andrea's return to the stage suggests the problem with this kind of forgetting; his return as a staged body reminds the audience that his pain did exist, and has been elided by the characters onstage. The infliction of pain on Horatio's body becomes actual, visualized and embodied through the enactment of violence onstage: his pain and death incite grief and inspire revenge. The mirroring deaths of Andrea and Horatio suggest that the visible sign, the actual violated body, produces a different effect in the memorializing of pain.

In the wake of Horatio's death, his father becomes the mouthpiece to understand his pain and death. In the face of his incomprehensible loss and emotional pain resulting from the death of his son, Hieronimo attempts to use language to construct meaning. Initially, he

repeatedly calls out to the heavens in lamentation. When he discovers the "bloody corpse" of Horatio, he wonders:

> What savage monster, not of human kind,
> Hath here been glutted with thy harmless blood?
> And left thy bloody corpse dishonored here,
> For me amid this dark and deathful shades,
> To drown thee with an ocean of my tears?
> Oh, heavens, why made you night to cover sin?
> 3.1.19-24

Hieronimo associates the act of murder with reason outside of human understanding or honor, and suggests his feeling of aloneness in the face of this senseless death. His question to the heavens, obviously, goes unanswered, as do his further lamentations. Ironically, he also seeks to blame the enactment of horror upon a non-human monster, despite the fact that the bloodshed that he mourns is ultimately rooted in and caused by humanity at its worst. He later repeats his effort to create a logic to connect barbarity among humans with an overarching divine justice: "Oh, sacred Heavens! if this unhallowed deed, / If this inhuman and barbarous attempt, /…How should we term your dealings to be just, / If you unjustly deal with those that in your justice trust?" (3.2.5-11). Hieronimo's language reveals a deteriorating sense of trust in a higher order of justice, as well as an evolving realization that his own language has no power to reach the ears of the heavens. As he says, "My grief no heart my thoughts no tongue can tell" (3.3.67). Quite literally, he recognizes the total inefficacy of his words either to accurately express his emotional pain, or to effect change in the course of human justice.

Although Hieronimo's frustrated lamentations may suggest the essential inability of language to convey the pain of the human condition, his speech seems more specifically frustrated by its inability to directly reach the Heavens. His earlier lamentations, as quoted

above, designate his target audience: the heavens. As he increasingly recognizes that his communication is seemingly not reaching its intended receiver, he repeatedly conceptualizes his words as adrift and immaterial. He woefully complains that his "exclaims" have "surcharged the air" while the "blust'ring winds" are "conspiring with my words" (3.7.3-5). Hieronimo laments the uncertain efficacy of direct communication with God, and expresses the problems of attempting unmediated access to divine logic.

As he recognizes the failure of verbal communication to make sense of the death of Horatio, Hieronimo seeks material substance with which to shape his mourning. He seems to want to go back to the body as a way to conceptualize and understand the object of his loss. His misrecognition of the Old Man in Act 3 displays a desire to metonymically understand pain and loss *through* the experience of another human. First, Hieronimo is asked to plead for the cause of Don Bazulto's murdered son but is only able to comprehend that his own son was murdered. He then misrecognizes Bazulto as Horatio himself, older and withered by death. He tells Bazulto, "Thou art the lively image of my grief, / Within thy face, my sorrows I may see" (3.14.162-163). While this almost comical misunderstanding can be viewed as the result of Hieronimo's grief-induced lunacy, it seems that the mistake emerges from an essential desire to relate and understand pain and death in a physical, shareable way. When language fails to create a substantial link between loss and justice, Hieronimo returns to a material body to give shape to his loss; he wishes to mediate his experience through the body of another.

Ultimately, Hieronimo finds neither divine reason nor human compassion to substantiate his pain or to comprehend his son's death. He asks, "How can you brook our play's catastrophe?"— the only way that he knows how is to actually, physically bridge the

divide between imagining loss and pain and experiencing it first hand. Therefore, he brings the decaying body of Horatio back onstage as evidence to his grief:

> See here my show, look on this spectacle.
> Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end.
> Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain.
> Here lay my treasure, here my treasure lost.
> …All fled, failed, died, yea, all decayed with this.
> 4.4.89-95

Horatio's display of the "spectacle" of the decaying body suggests again that the capacity of language to inspire compassion and to initiate understanding is a failure. Through his repetitive use of "here," he compulsively emphasizes and re-emphasizes the evidence of a material body as the only means by which to truly convey his loss.

Although Hieronimo believes that the only way that the audience can "know" his pain is to see Horatio's body themselves, even this horrific display is not enough evidence to create appropriate response. Therefore, the metatheatrical event at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy* becomes a commentary on the inefficacy of theater, or spectacle, to truly provide audiences or individuals with the feeling, ecstasy, and horror of pain. In the end of the play, the audience within the play (the Spanish King, Viceroy, the Duke of Castile, and their train), as well as the "real" audience of the play presumably conflate the real deaths of Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia with their theatrical representations. Likewise, the "real" body of Horatio onstage becomes another prop in the confused bloodbath of the play-within-a-play. While at the moment of discovery of Horatio's murdered body Hieronimo and Isabella believe that "To know the author" of "this endless woe" would provide "some ease of grief" (2.6.39-40), in the end Hieronimo exclaims that *he* is both "Author and actor in this tragedy" (4.4.147). Hence, in response to the failure of the truth of the crime to ease grief, the inaccessibility of the heavens, and his inability to communicate with any divine

author of fate, his bloody actions take the place of his ineffectual words. He says, "But wherefore waste I mine unfruitful words, / When naught but blood will satisfy my woes?" (3.7.69-70). Revenge, or the perpetration of a bloody cycle of violence, is the only satisfaction for Hieronimo's "woe."

Although Hieronimo attempts to understand and convey pain through speech, to represent pain by staging it, and to show evidence of pain with the body of his son, the final scene of the play suggests that the only means by which to understand pain is to feel it. Hieronimo's play-within-a-play, "Soliman and Perseda," although fraudulent as theater, is the means by which to make the Viceroy and the King understand his emotional pain, and to make their sons feel the pain that they inflicted upon Horatio. At the moment of their realization that staged murder is in fact real murder, Hieronimo tells the now childless fathers, "Oh, good words! / As dear to me was my Horatio / As yours, or yours, or yours, my Lord, to you" (4.4.167-170). Neither verbal nor visual representation does the work that Hieronimo seeks to accomplish, which is to create a "brook" between the heavens, other people, and his tragedy. In a parallel action, Hieronimo effectively literalizes the meaninglessness of language to convey pain in his act of self-mutilation. The stage direction indicates that he "bites out his tongue," an act that unifies the embodied experience of pain with an abject failure of words. Despite the seeming message at the end of the play (we need to feel pain to know it), Andrea's ghost once again draws our attention to the pleasures that we feel in witnessing the pain of others. He lists the spectacles of violence that he and the audience have witnessed, and says "Aye, these were spectacles to please my soul" (4.5.12). Andrea does not walk away from the play a changed man, nor does he react with sympathy

towards the dead souls now in his charge; instead, he both finds pleasure in the massacre and desires to perpetuate the pain "endlessly" by dooming his enemies to hellish torture.

Huston Diehl suggests that the end of *The Spanish Tragedy* questions and places distrust in spectacles that lay at the heart of the Protestant reformers' critique of Catholic ritual and ceremony. While Hieronimo does mask the purpose of his play-within-a-play, and thus creates a "fraudulent kind of theatricality",[101] his decision to convey meaning in this way comes as a result of a chain of failures to communicate otherwise. If the play is a critique of Catholicism, it does not provide any viable or authoritative Protestant alternative. Hieronimo repeatedly attempts to invoke the heavens with his speech but receives no reply; his revengeful actions are inspired by his failure to communicate with or trust in divine reason. Language, bodies as evidence, and staged representation are *all* evacuated of stable meaning; an individual's ability to understand pain is rooted solely in his or her physical, embodied, and subjective experience of it. While the play may evacuate the "magic" of ceremony by revealing the "reality" of the dead bodies behind it, the lack of magic simply leaves a raw, senseless, and patently untransformative perpetuation of human pain.

Much as language fails in Kyd, Shakespeare's explores a similar problem in his first tragedy. Various critics have noticed the "misfires" of language in *Titus Andronicus*, but they describe this problem as a purely literary phenomenon or attempt to attach meaning from a displaced, traumatized source, such as the Protestant Reformation.[102] For instance, Huston Diehl argues that "Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is both a product of the Protestant Reformation—a reformed drama—and a producer of Protestant habits of

---

[101] Diehl, *Staging Reform*, 119.

[102] Thomas Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

thought—a reforming drama…[Early modern] dramatists represent, reflect on, and sometimes seek to redress the ruptures caused by the English Reformation."[103] In Diehl's formulation, the drama of the period directly speaks to and intentionally interacts with specific problems created by the Reformation. Diehl points to the ways in which the Reformation deeply disturbed the relationship between signifier and signified and the ways in which drama "reinterprets" forms from a medieval, Catholic past. I concur that Elizabethan revenge tragedy "reinterprets" elements of medieval drama, in particular, the representation of the body in pain. However, these plays inhabit a deeply ambivalent imaginative space in which "Protestant habits of thought" remain mired in both uncertainty and doubt. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, the figure of Lavinia epitomizes this liminal imaginative space: silent, bleeding, and ever-present, what meaning does her body convey to an audience? Lavinia's body in pain *is different* than the bodies of Ovid's heroines or Catholic female martyrs: she is void of stable signification, she does not fly to heaven before our very eyes, and is seemingly meaningless in and of herself. She suffers without a clear didactic purpose or spiritual enlightenment, and Lavinia's response to the repeated, ineffectual attempts to attach meaning to her body and to her experience always produce the same effect: blood.

Severing, cutting, and stabbing comprise a disturbing majority of the action in *Titus Andronicus*. Each moment of violence conspicuously opens and exposes the incredible vulnerability of the human body. However, at the temporal and emotional center of the play, Lavinia's rape and mutilation becomes the central act of violence, and her body in pain becomes an intensely loaded signifier, precisely in that meaning cannot seem to attach to her

[103] Diehl, *Staging Reform,* 1-3.

in any clear or stable way. Language surrounds, shapes, and warps both the action of her rape and mutilation, and the abject form of her body afterwards; Ovid's Philomela haunts the play, but this mythological story fails to explain or reveal Lavinia's individual experience to the characters, despite the glaring repetition of its horrible pattern; Titus's manic attempts to attach meaningful action to his desire for vengeance further mutates a clear sense of justice.[104] Lavinia's body in pain functions as both void and center in *Titus Andronicus*. The proliferation of layered, mirrored attempts to fix meaning upon Lavinia only seems to reveal another set of mirrors and layers, none of which adequately provide signification to the body in pain. In response to the questions why? how? what can we do?, the body in pain responds with inevitable silence.

---

[104] In *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Lynn Enterline beautifully describes the body in Shakespeare as "both a bearer of meaning as well as a linguistic agent, a place where representation, materiality, and action collide" (6). However, her reading of *Titus* quite conspicuously ignores any discussion of performativity and *action*, and rather reads the play as a purely textual ancestor of Ovid's *Metamorphosis.* Enterline suggests that the ruin of bodies in Shakespeare reflects "the power and limitations of language as such" (3), but again does not expand her discussion of linguistic representation to consider the interplay between verbal, visual and bodily signifiers *onstage*. In *Performing Early Modern Trauma*, Anderson notes the failure of language in *Titus Andronicus*, but attributes this failure not to Lavinia's body in pain per se but to a "significant cultural loss" that "alters normative modes of expression and representation" (3). In other words, according to Anderson, the problem with language in *Titus* has little to do with Lavinia or the body in pain, but is actually an outgrowth of lingering, residual trauma of the Protestant Reformation. He suggests that Lavinia's body "bears witness" to the persevering impact of the traumatic events depicted by Foxe in the *Book of Martyrs*, and the play memorializes English cultural "desire for Roman legacy" (21). In an alternative move to displace the meaning of Lavinia's body, Leonard Tennenhouse suggests in "Playing and Power" in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama,* ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991) that her fragmented form actually works as a site to grapple with the fragmentation of the English state and the political rivalries of Elizabeth's court.

As Jack Reese describes in "The Formalization of Horror in *Titus Andronicus,*" Shakespeare unfolds a system of symmetry in the play's construction. The stage directions in the opening scene instruct the rivaling brothers, Saturninus and Bassianus, to enter simultaneously at opposite doors, thus creating a physical mirroring between them to match their parallel and competing desires, which later reflects the symmetrical rivalry between Chiron and Demetrius.[105] Even more significantly, actions of revenge in the play are consciously constructed as progressively warped mirror images of previous actions. Desire for Lavinia becomes a perversion, as Saturninus and Bassianus's state-sanctioned pursuits of Lavinia become distorted into the wild and animalistic primal desires of Chiron and Demetrius in the woods. Justifications for ritual murder are complicated when Titus's "religious" sacrifice of Tamora's son, Alarbus, undergoes a horrific metamorphosis to become Tamora's sons' disfiguring rape and mutilation of Lavinia. In each case, the mirroring action of violence mutates the supposed justice of the original: Mutius's murder perverts the code of martial honor represented by the deaths of Titus's warrior-sons; Lavinia's rape and mutilation serve as a warped mirror to the ritualistic murder of Alarbus.

Tamora's hunger for revenge builds towards the ravishment of Lavinia, which then produces Titus's symmetrical drive for revenge. The symmetry of each act of violence calls conspicuous attention to the nature of cause and effect, actions and reactions in the play, but despite (or perhaps because of) this repetition and patterning, meaning, justice, and reason become mutated. Lavinia absorbs the full brunt of Tamora's drive for revenge, which is displaced from father to innocent daughter. Both figuratively and literally, Lavinia becomes

---

[105] The stage direction reads: "*Enter the* Tribunes *and* Senatours *aloft: And then enter* Saturninus *and his followers at one dore, and* Bassianus *and his followers, with Drums and Trumpets."*

the receptacle of revenge. While the death of soldiers and the sacrifice of Alarbus arguably take place within an economy of ritual and ceremony, albeit violent ritual and ceremony, the rape of Lavinia lacks such structure. Lavinia's innocence, her sheer victimization, and her subsequent agonized silence interrogate the very concept of justified violence.[106] To offset the injustice of Lavinia's rape, Titus's revenge becomes the purpose of the second half of the play. Lavinia's ravishment, unseen and unheard, occurs in the temporal center of the dramatic action, and becomes both conspicuous absence and definitive presence for the second half of the play.

The devastation of Lavinia in *Titus*, of course, is a story drawn from a pattern. Shakespeare's rape of Lavinia consciously refers to the rape of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's description of her rape and mutilation provide a clear mental picture of "hir naked throate" slung back in a plea for death, and a detailed description of Philomela's tongue "quivering on the ground" while "the stumpe whereon it hung did patter still."[107] Shakespeare's *Titus* also shares the story-pattern with an anonymous chapbook from 1594, presumably written near the time that Shakespeare composed the play. The chapbook, entitled "The History of *Titus Andronicus*," describes Lavinia's rape thus: "in a villainous Manner, staking her down by the Hair of her Head, and binding her Hands behind her, they turned up her Nakedness, and forced their Way into her Closet of Chastity, taking it by

---

[106] In "Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare," *ELH* 49:3 (Autumn, 1982): 576-601, Peter Sacks suggests that this violence and the resulting difficulty the play exhibits in explaining it shows the "onset of skepticism...in the divinely guaranteed nature of justice, leaving in its wake not merely the sense of an exclusively mundane and fallible system of human law, but a suspicion that the 'Justice' which had now departed...had perhaps never been more than a fiction" (578).

[107] In Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Paul; New York, Columbia University Press, 1957), 54.

Turns."[108] The language of the chapbook version directly addresses the rape moment. The story of the rape is also recounted in two extant early modern ballads, as exemplified in the Pepys Collection, entitled "The Lamentable and Tragical History of *Titus Andronicus*; with the Fall of his 25 Sons, in the Wars of the Goths, with the manner of the Ravishment of his Daughter, Lavinia by the Empresses two Sons, through the means of a Bloody Moor, taken by the Sword of Titus, in the War; with his Revenge upon their Cruel and Inhumane Act" (2.184-185) and "*Titus Andronicus* Complaint" (1.86). Both ballads describe the moment of Lavinia's rape and mutilation from the perspective of Titus himself:

> But now behold what wounded most my mind,
> The Empresses two sons of Tygers kind,
> My daughter ravished without remorse,
> And tooke away her honour quite perforce.
> When they had tasted of so sweet a Flower,
> Fearing their sweet should shortly turn to sowre,
> They cut her tongue, whereby she could not tell,
> Now that dishonour unto her befell.
> Then both her hands they falsly cut off quite,
> Whereby their wickednesse she could not write,
> Nor with her needle on her Sampler sow,
> The bloody workers of her direfull woe.[109]

The story of the rape of Lavinia is replicated and retold in both popular form and in the arguably more erudite translation of Ovid, suggesting a continuous discourse of and about this moment of violence.

---

[108] Ibid., 42.

[109] This transcription is directly from the "*Titus Andronicus* Complaint" ballad. The two variations of the *Titus* ballad have minor variations in spelling, capitalization and word choice (for example, "direfull" in the example above, becomes "dismal" in the other text). However, the content of the two ballads is virtually the same. Both ballads can be found in the Samuel Pepys collection, and on the English Broadside Ballad Archive online. See http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20040/transcription and http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20800/transcription. To date, EBBA has located six extant versions of these two ballads.

Though patterned against and among these, and possibly other source stories, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* removes the action of the rape and mutilation from the stage. Lavinia's offstage violation constitutes a void in the action, a space that leaves the audience to rely on images from previous copies of the story. Verbal and visual representations of the violence "fill in" the missing moment. Instead of limiting this central moment to a perceptible phenomenon, this play manipulates both verbal and visual signifiers to create a copy of an indeterminate original moment of action. The action of violence is conspicuously *not* staged, certainly for reasons both practical and aesthetic. Staging a rape on the early modern stage would have been technically difficult as well as potentially volatile and censurable; however, it seems that this "void" in the action proves an even more effective means by which to elicit the imagined horror from an audience. Shakespeare uses language to preface, explain, and re-describe the spectacle of Lavinia's body in pain, and therefore engages in a process of manipulating and mutating the moment of violence with words.

When her rapists drag her away to perform the unseen act, Quintus and Martius come onstage to discover Bassianus's dead body, and to create a displaced image of the violence that happens simultaneously. Somewhere nearby, Demetrius and Chiron torture and violate Lavinia, while her brothers discover her husband in a bloody pit. The words of Martius and Quintus prime the audience to envision a "detested, dark, blood-drinking pit," an "unhallowed and bloodstained hole," "maiden blood" and "a swallowing womb" during the time when the rape is presumably occurring offstage. The brothers' almost slap-stick exclamations about the pit and the dialogue and stage directions that suggest their struggle within the hole, evoke sexualized imagery of Lavinia's vaginal wounds, and of a tomb,

thereby suggesting for the audience imagery of sex, violence, blood, and death during the moments when we know Lavinia is being violated. As Quintus says when he peeks into the pit: "My heart suspects more than mine eye can see" (2.3.213). Visual stimuli, suggests Quintus, become insubstantial in comparison to productions of a witness's imagination.

However, when Lavinia returned to the early modern stage, what did the audience *see*? The stage direction suggests that she returns "her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravished," but of course, the audience must read this stage direction in the body of the actor. In case the costuming and special effects did not effectively reveal the truth of her violation, Demetrius fills in the blanks for the audience. He taunts Lavinia by asking her "Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee," while Chiron's reference to "thy stumps" informs the audience that her hands are missing, lest the effect of the actor's appearance leave her condition in question. Lavinia's body is intended to make a statement; silent, bleeding, in pain, she embodies the human condition of living through that which is "worse than killing" (2.3.175).

In this play, Shakespeare's art attempts to place the abject body, in the form of Lavinia, before an audience. Lavinia's open and bleeding body reveals the fragility of the human form, her silenced voice suggests the annihilation of subjective identity, and her ruined "value" as an object of exchange between men truly seems to evacuate her body of all previous signifiers (woman, daughter, wife, object of beauty, speaking subject). [110] Julia Kristeva describes the abject not just as the corpse, a wound, or dung, but as that which human beings must "permanently thrust aside in order to live."[111] For Kristeva, the abject is

---

[110] Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare,* Chapter 1.

[111] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.

the horror of the human condition that always exists on the borders of consciousness, at the edge of hallucination. Kristeva suggests that language, religion, and art are all systems of signification constructed to set boundaries in an otherwise chaotic universe. The body of Lavinia pushes the borders of human existence—she has been forced to the edge of death, but her body remains to haunt the stage. Her presence forces the questions: How can a human being live in such pain? How can human beings enact such cruel punishment upon one another? How can each audience member sit numbly, for while Lavinia is just an actor, the pain that she represents is such a real part of the world outside the theater? How can reason and justice coexist with this kind of pain in the world? The body of Lavinia truly, in the words of Kristeva, "disturbs identity, system, [and] order" and "draws attention to the fragility of the law."[112]

When Lavinia returns to the stage, Marcus attempts to fill in the space left by the offstage violence with his use of language. In his speech, language reproduces imagery from the Ovidian myth, and evokes the ekphrastic tradition to unsuccessfully aestheticize the horrific spectacle of Lavinia's body. Marcus seemingly attempts to paint a verbal picture of Lavinia although the audience can see her. When he first discovers her, Marcus wishes to wake up, hoping that the image before him is part of a terrible dream, a hallucination. Indeed, the appearance of Lavinia onstage seems to be the stuff of nightmares; it is almost as if she returns from the dead to haunt the stage for the remainder of the play. Marcus immediately aestheticizes the horrific image of his niece's body, creating verbal imagery of

---

[112] Ibid., 4.

"bubbling fountains," "lily hands," and "two branches," despite the fact that the audience can supposedly *see* a bloody mouth and two gruesomely dismembered stumps.

In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry suggests that when confronted with the essentially unspeakable experience of pain, humans rely on "artifacts," or material things, to displace or substantiate pure sentience; we try to associate the abstraction of sentience with the solidity of objects.[113] She suggests that we endow "interior sensory events with a metaphysical referent….the making of what is originally interior and private into something exterior and sharable, and, conversely, the reabsorption of what is now exterior and shareable into the intimate recesses of individual consciousness…" [114] When faced with the abject body of Lavinia, Marcus relies on materiality as way to substantiate the unconcealed fragility of the human frame. He imagines Lavinia's body as a litany of non-sentient objects: "branches," "ornaments," "a crimson river," "bubbling fountain stirred with wind," "a conduit," "aspen leaves." In response to the horrifying fragility of the body, Marcus projects that which cannot be incorporated into a system of signification, the abject, onto external, understandable, and shareable artifacts. In particular, he uses imagery from *nature* not simply, perhaps, in an ekphrastic turn, but also as a way to empower raw sentience with the staggering, and "unhurtable" forces of the natural world.[115]

---

[113] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 280.

[114] Ibid., 284.

[115] In *The Body in Pain*, Scarry suggests that "the naturally existing external world— whose staggering powers and beauty need not be rehearsed here—is wholly ignorant of the "hurtability" of human beings" (288).

Marcus goes on to further displace the spectacle as he relates what he sees to stories he has heard: "Fair Philomel, why she but lost her tongue / And in a tedious sampler sewed her mind. / But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee..." (2.4.38-40). He evokes the image of Philomela, who can sew her story into a cloth and will eventually transform into a bird although the audience can supposedly *see* Lavinia's inability to sew and the stark reality of her unromantic transformation from virtuous beauty to ghastly object of torture. Marcus's speech employs metaphor and allegory, but he does not actually recognize that Lavinia's mutilation fits the Ovidian pattern. It takes several more scenes for anyone to acknowledge that life has imitated art, or perhaps more accurately, Shakespeare's art has imitated art.

Marcus's re-telling of the story of Philomela is the first of several re-creations of the unseen experience of Lavinia's rape and mutilation, or perhaps the second, if we consider the "bloody pit" debacle as verbal representation of an absent action. After several attempts to understand Lavinia's signs (Titus exclaims, "I understand her signs" in 3.1 and claims "I can interpret all her martyred signs" in 3.2), not only does Titus retell the experience of her ravishment, but several other characters do as well. When Lavinia finally accesses Ovid, she is able to silently "re-tell" her story through the tale of Philomela, using her mouth to guide the staff as she writes "Strupum. Chiron. Demetrius." in the dirt. Aaron then retells the story of her rape when he is cornered by Lucius, and gleefully proclaims "'Twas her two sons that murdered Bassianus; / They cut thy sister's tongue, and ravished her, / And cut her hands, and trimmed her as thou sawest" (5.1.91-93); he contributes to the story with his boastful descriptions of the machinations of his "bloody mind." The story is then *repeated* by Titus before he kills Chiron and Demetrius. He tells them the story of their own crime when he says, "Both her sweet hands, her tongue, and that more dear / Than hands or tongue, her

spotless chastity, / Inhuman traitors, you constrained and forced" (5.2.175-177). Titus retells the crime to Saturninus and Tamora before he slaughters them, and finally, Lucius reveals the story to the Romans in the end. Why the seemingly excessive re-telling of the horrific, "unseen" central scene?

First, it seems that the re-telling of the "truth" of the crimes against Lavinia continues to shape and realize the moment; in the absence of visual signifiers, language overcompensates to produce "reality." However, in addition, just as mirroring *within* the play creates variation with each new reflection, the reality of Lavinia's body represents a mutation of the "original" story as told by Marcus, a mutation that shows the rift between meaning and language. The repetition of the story marks a deviation from a moment of identifiable action within a play (an action that the audience sees and hears). In her comparison between the actions of plays and criminal trials, Scarry suggests that the action of a play "is complete and cannot be altered; its audience must passively bear it," while the action of a trial "is incomplete and can be mimetically altered; its audience, the jury, is empowered to in some sense reverse it, and it is *only* because this possibility exists that the story is being retold."[116] *Titus Andronicus,* then, is more trial-like than play-like in this formulation. Like a trial, the play redescribes the event over and over, making and remaking the experience of Lavinia through language. This remaking is only possible *because* the moment, the scene of the crime, was absent from "reality," since it occurred offstage. Significantly, the retelling and "remaking" of Lavinia's story, at least in the scenes directly after her reappearance onstage, link her experience to that of Philomela. The "passive wish," as Scarry would call it, rests in the hope that the truth of Lavinia's abject body could be

[116] Ibid., 298.

shaped into the story of Philomela; the wish is that she will experience metamorphosis, that she will fly away without pain.[117] The speech of Aaron, the revelations of Titus in the end of the play, and Lucius's re-telling to the Romans, all conspicuously exclude any reference to Ovid, while the honor-killing of Lavinia by her father in the end starkly points to the finality of her humiliation. Not only is Lavinia's reality emphatically different from the "fiction" of Philomela, but her quiet death seems to leave raw the problem of why pain makes sense or can be justified.

Quintus and Martius's "bloody pit" banter provides the audience with imagery that temporally and metaphorically parallels Lavinia's rape; Marcus's ekphrastic speech displaces the horror of Lavinia's violation only to reveal the glaring disjunction between Ovidian metamorphosis and her mangled body. What is the function of these descriptions in the play? The rhetorical displacement and aestheticization of Lavinia's mangled body serves to frame a disjointed relationship between visual and verbal signifiers in the play. The layering of language surrounding Lavinia's rape and the physical evidence of her body attempt to transform her into an aestheticized object or an image from literature, yet the action and the visual evidence onstage tell a different story. Clearly, if this text is read as performance, not only do the symmetry of scenes and stage directions prioritize action and movement of bodies in this play[118], but the interplay between language and action emphasize the disjunction of the two onstage.

---

[117] In *The Body in Pain*, Scarry says that "implicit in this mimesis of restorability is the belief that catastrophes are themselves (not simply narratively but actually) reconstructable, the belief that the world can exist, usually does exist, should in this instance have existed, and may in this instance be "remarkable" to exist, without such slippage…everyone....[has] the *passive wish* that what is so were overwise…." (299)

[118] Jack E. Reese, "The Formalization of Horror in *Titus Andronicus.*" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter, 1970): 82.

While the manipulations and repetitions of verbal signification fruitlessly work to undo pain, her ravishment spawns similarly compulsive, yet impotent actions. Lavinia's continual presence onstage does not freeze and petrify violence and loss, as Peter Sacks has argued, but rather opposes such stagnancy.[119] The visual and the verbal do not actually function identically on stage, and in this case, each do their own work, competing to provide account for or to fill in the void left by the absent moment of Lavinia's rape. Despite the aestheticized language surrounding Lavinia's rape and mutilation, her actions onstage haunt and remind the audience of her violation, and mirror the process by which Titus himself comes to terms with loss and seeks revenge. Much like Andrea and Horatio in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Lavinia's body in pain serves as physical evidence of Titus's inexpressible agony and as embodied justification for his vengeful actions.

Directly before he sees Lavinia for the first time, Titus discovers his own muteness in the face of the Roman state. Although he pleads on hands and knees for the tribunes to pardon his sons, Lucius tells him, "no tribune hears you speak" (3.1.32). While his actions in battle protected Rome, and his words were, in the first scene of the play, advice upon which to rest an empire, the sight of Lavinia reflects his impotence in both word and deed. When she enters the scene with Marcus, Lavinia's bleeding mouth and stump-like hands serve as mirrors to her father's ineffectual words and actions. When first he sees Lavinia, Titus arguably crosses the line between sanity and insanity, broken by the devastating reality of his daughter's leaking body. He says, "Had I but seen thy picture in this plight, / It would have madded me: what shall I do / Now I behold thy lively body so?" (3.1.103-105). Like the audience, Titus has but an imaginative, internal "picture" of the unspeakable actions that

[119] Sacks, "Where Words Prevail Not."

caused Lavinia's pain, and he desires to *do* something in response to her pain. He goes on to question her, despite her inevitable silence:

> Shall thy good uncle and thy brother Lucius
> And thou and I sit round about some fountain,
> Looking all downwards to behold our cheeks
> How they are stained…
> And in the fountain shall we gaze so long
> Till the fresh taste be taken from that clearness,
> And make a brine pit with our bitter tears?
> Or shall we cut away our hands like thine?
> Or shall we bite our tongues, and in dumb shows
> Pass the remainder of our hateful days?
> What shall we do?
>
> 3.1.121-133

His litany of questions is met with silence, with nothing; this void reemphasizes the impotence of Titus's language, as well as the impossibility of any action to provide meaning to Lavinia's body in pain. After all, crying, biting off tongues, and cutting off hands will only reproduce pain, without compensating for or alleviating it. Further, Titus attempts to communicate with higher powers in his attempt to understand her suffering. However, in response to his plea, "If any power pities wretched tears, / To that I call!" (3.1.208-209), he can only turn again to the fragmented body of Lavinia.

Titus's world and his own psyche stand on the verge of overflow. Further deluge occurs later in the same scene. Titus cuts off his hand in an effort to reflect the pain of his daughter—again, his action is a mutated copy of his daughter's humiliation and pain. As Titus prepares to exact revenge upon Tamora and her kin, Lavinia shadows his every action and constantly reminds the audience that she *is* the justification behind Titus's violent plans. Just as her physical inability to speak or act with her hands reflects her father's impotent speech and action, the stage directions for the remainder of the play indicate the importance of Lavinia and Titus's symmetrical actions. In 3.1.207, they kneel together; in 3.1.274 they

rise together; they leave the stage together, read together. Their cooperative murder of Chiron and Demetrius displays both the symmetry of action between father and daughter, and the way in which revenge reflects the action that provokes it. While Lavinia suffered as the receptacle for the brothers' lust in the moment of her rape, she later acts as the receptacle of their blood when she holds the bowl beneath their severed throats. In the end, Titus and Lavinia are buried together. From the moment of her reappearance onstage as an abject body until the time of her burial, Lavinia haunts the stage as physical evidence of pain onstage. She serves as embodied proof, an inversion perhaps, of Titus's internal, psychic suffering.

Lavinia's body and her pain form a void in signification. Titus requests that she "make some sign" (3.1.121), he believes that he can "understand her signs" (3.1.143), and believes that she "dost talk in signs" (3.2.12). However, the "sign" that Lavinia can communicate is blood, and the signification behind that sign, the reason for it, is a refracting chain of violent and painful moments. While Titus repeatedly refers to his daughter as a "martyr," her signs are patently *not* the signs from God. In contrast to Christian martyrs, in particular Protestant martyrs such as those in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, the cause behind Lavinia's death does not uphold a righteous or lofty cause; rather, her suffering reminds us of and represents the senselessness and continuity of human cruelty. Literally, her signs point back to Chiron and Demetrius, the perpetrators of her rape. Further, her death does not stand out as a signifier to the audience within the play. Her death is lost in a midst of a royal bloodbath, putting an end to her "shame and [her] father's sorrow" (5.3.47) without any positive indication that a transformative afterlife awaits. Titus's desire to categorize Lavinia as a *martyr* only serves to foreground the very difference between her experience of pain and the didactic and revered pain of Christian martyrs.

The rape and mutilation of Lavinia form a pivot in this conspicuously symmetrical play. From this missing moment emerges the body of Lavinia as a visual representation of human pain and reminder of unjustified violence, Titus's drive for revenge, and the prominent tension between language, bodies in action, and stable meaning in *Titus Andronicus*. Lavinia's inability to speak, Quintus and Martius's gruesome and unwittingly euphemistic metaphors, and Marcus's inept description of what he sees all suggest the incapacity of language to truly express the horror of human pain; language cannot fill the void left by this absent moment. While Ovid's story ultimately gives Lavinia a way to reveal the "truth" of her story, it is only after multiple uses and misreadings of her pain. The very contrast between her reality and Ovid's Philomela highlights the difference between myth and "reality." Titus wonders and wonders, "what shall we do?" in response to Lavinia, but ultimately, and obviously, none of his plotting can repair the body of his daughter or help her to take flight like a mythical creature. In *Titus*, language cannot explain, stories do not reveal, and action cannot justify the abject thing at the center of the play: Lavinia's body in pain.

Even with the evidence of Lavinia before our very eyes, verbal re-presentation of her abject body is both varied and unstable. She acts as a vacuum, eliciting abundant verbal response, metonymical comparison, and rationalizations of further mutations of violence; however, instead of validating or recognizing the "truth" of these projections of meaning, she draws them in, absorbs them silently. Lavinia's experience of rape, and her experience of pain, is always displaced from the people around her and from the audience: we can only suspect, conjecture, and explain in an incomplete way, because her first-hand account is so clearly unavailable. While the play attempts to explain her abject body with language, with

the memory of stories in a pattern and with vengeful action, the failures of each to metonymically determine the nature of this being in pain suggest the very solitariness of pain itself. The body in pain in *Titus Andronicus* also calls into question the stability and cohesiveness of human perception; although each audience member "sees" the same body, the proliferation of disjunctions between descriptive language and verbal images from other "copies" of the story-pattern, and from the reality of an internal state of pain, only serves to illuminate the problem of representing, or knowing, the truth of another.

In both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, the body in pain is evacuated of stable meaning, evades verbal signification, and points to the stark and seemingly stagnant process of change within the human cycle of violence. Each play demonstrates conspicuous and repetitive verbal attempts to communicate about pain and to request help in response to it. In the absence of answers, in the abstraction of doubt, and as a failure of language, revengeful action occurs, which only perpetuates and repeats the experience of human pain. Unmediated communication with divine justice produces doubt in these plays, and doubt produces a human response of re-instigating pain upon others. Thus, suffering happens without spiritual enlightenment, justice, or metamorphic magic. In this way, the plays demonstrate the Protestant human condition of damnation, and refute Calvin's statement that "such things [miseries] don't happen very often and never all at once!" In their horrific and innumerable miseries, the ineffectiveness of language to communicate or bring comfort to pain, and the ineffectiveness of action to bring about change, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* both play out the phenomenology of doubt onstage.

On one level, the body in pain in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus* begins to mark a shift away from the stage-presence of a concrete, obvious object of horror, such as the abject

body of Christ in the cycle plays of the late medieval period, towards language-inspired, abstract and displaced figures that invoke the *mind* to *imagine* pain and horror. While the bodies of Andrea, Horatio, and Lavinia each signify abjection in their fragmented, opened, and bleeding forms, the language used to describe each body becomes central to the conceptualization of that abjection. By way of the repetitions, re-tellings, and misfigurations of language to describe and explain these bodies, the very slippery and subjective nature of words themselves emerges. This result points to a particularly early modern problem; while the early modern subject becomes responsible for and reliant upon language as never before (to communicate with God and read the Bible, to develop a nation, to establish a literary tradition), the prismatic and abstract elements of language, as opposed to the concrete and shareable elements of the object, actually threaten impasses or misfires in communication, rather than improvements upon it.

On another level, the body in pain in these two plays presents the problems that occur when communication fails to progress or move forward. In the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Andrea does not transcend or learn from the pain that he has experienced, but rather chooses to repeat the cycle by inflicting the pains of hell upon his enemies: he elects to replace Ixion with Don Lorenzo, and asks that Pedringano "live, dying still in endless flames" in "boiling Acheron" (4.5.30-44). Instead of a conclusive finality to the pains and horrors of the play itself, Revenge declares that "though death hath end their misery, / I'll there begin their endless tragedy" (4.5.48). In a similar perpetuation of horror at the end of *Titus,* Lucius chooses to continue the reign of terror beyond the play's final lines. His doom of Aaron is to "set him breast-deep in earth, and famish him. / There let him stand and rave and cry for food" (5.3.179-180), while he orders Tamora's body to be thrown to ravenous

birds outside the city limits. Given the horrific and compulsive experiences of pain in each play, these final judgments signify a grim continuation of pain, even beyond the boundaries of the stage. Just as in the beginning of *The Spanish Tragedy* Andrea describes an "endless wheel" of torture and pain in his depiction of hell, these revenge tragedies construct a parallel cycle in terrestrial form; the perpetuation of suffering past the end point of each play produces and reproduces pain as a consequence of pain.

In the Jacobean tragedy of John Webster, much as in the endings of these early revenge tragedies, language becomes the primary tool to inspire the imaginations of audiences to think beyond the visual signifiers of pain, and to imagine a place of horror even greater than that which can exist onstage. However, in the bodies of both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, words do not adequately function to explain or to repair the body in pain. These plays, temporally situated in an emerging system of Protestant belief, convey a substantial anxiety about the efficacy of language to reach divine ears or to convey physical and emotional experience; therefore, the body itself haunts the stage as necessary evidence, as a reminder of or placeholder for all that language cannot grasp.

IV. "The pain's nothing": The Apprehension of Pain in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*

In the final moments before his death, Ferdinand, John Webster's maniacal villain in *The Duchess of Malfi*, announces his "philosophy": "The pain's nothing; pain many times is taken away with the apprehension of greater" (5.5.58-61). The mind's capacity to imagine pain, he suggests, far outweighs the body's capacity to feel it. Ferdinand's philosophy positions physical stimulation in subordination to mental functioning, and characterizes pain, most frequently conceptualized in terms of the body, as an experience influenced, if not dictated, by the mind. Critics have often criticized Webster's play for its excessive violence and horror; indeed, *The Duchess of Malfi* meditates on the human condition of pain at great length.[120] However, this play departs from a quick and gory bloodbath model of drama to reposition the specter of violence and the bodily sensation of pain in terms of mental experience.

John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* explores the phenomenological problem of what is "real" and how we know it; in particular, the play disturbs an audience's ability to differentiate between physical and mental experience, concrete and imagined presence, true and artificial horror. Ferdinand's vivid imaginings and verbal descriptions of physical pain and torture realize the potential for horror that originates in the human mind. The Duchess's

[120] See Don D. Moore's "Introduction" in *John Webster: The Critical Heritage.* (New York: Routledge, 1981), 3-26. Moore describes the critical history of *The Duchess of Malfi* as an erratic trajectory, ranging from comparisons with Shakespeare (William Hazlitt suggested in 1819 that Webster's dramatic works "come the nearest to Shakespeare of any thing we have upon record" [13]) to contemporary charges of the play's absurd and improbable plot.

subsequent experience of torture and her articulations of the sensation of pain likewise exist in the realm of abstract imagination. Although a viewing audience does not see a bloody, suffering body, the Duchess describes her experience in terms of physical pain. The play adapts the genre of drama to incorporate an innovative narrative strategy: using props, language, and intertextual metanarrative, the play builds tension, represents torture, and expounds upon the experience of physical pain *without* the physical referent of a suffering body. Of course, the final scenes of the play result in the death of most major characters by strangulation or stabbing; however, these deaths do not comprise the horrific core of the narrative. Using strategies that demand imaginative work on the part of the audience, Webster demonstrates that true horror indeed resides within the human mind.[121]

In the discussion to follow, I explore the imaginative and performative construction of the body, the mind, and the experience of pain in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi.*

---

[121] The narrative in *The Duchess of Malfi* may be as suitable for reading as it is for viewing because the audience does not *see* the bodily signifier of pain, but rather must imagine it according to the verbal instructions of the characters. At the very end of her article "Death on the Stage, Death of the Stage: The Antitheatricality of *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Theatre Journal* 42, No. 2 (May, 1990): 194-207, Andrea Henderson suggests that the play actually "reflects a movement toward a literary culture which privileges private reading" (206). The quarto's 1623 frontispiece announces that the printed version is a "perfect and exact Coppy," but also suggests the addition of "diverse things Printed, that the length of the Play would not beare in the Presentment." This introductory material indicates that the printed version of Webster's play may differ from the performance version of the play. The introductory commendatory verses by Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, and John Ford repeatedly indicate an emphasis on print, with a focus on a reading rather than a viewing public. Ford's reference to the "monument" of Webster's work and to his "clear pen" suggest the material substance and stability of a printed text, rather than the ephemeral and in-the-moment nature of a performance. While I consider *The Duchess of Malfi* in terms of performance, I agree that the dramatic strategy looks forward to the possibilities of print narrative; like the printed narrative, the dramatic narrative maximizes the potential of an audience's imagination to produce horror more palpable and "real" than could physical representations or images onstage.

Gail Kern Paster compellingly argues that to people of the early modern period, the mind, body, and world were understood as a "network" of "mutually modulatory influences in a dynamic action."[122] She speculates that Elizabethans had trouble thinking about things in terms of abstraction or immateriality. However, Webster, a later dramatist of the Jacobean period, ventures to explore the possibilities of abstraction and immateriality, as well as the potential for the operations of a human mind. I suggest that in this play, human interiority, or what I will call the mind, is situated as both the creator and the receptor of pain. Pain in this play is *not about the body*: it is a construct of the imagination, a particular vantage point of perception.[123] Ferdinand's imaginative construction of pain creates the template for a new kind of torture, which is based upon illusion and mind-games; he emerges as an early modern psychopath. The Duchess herself, the recipient of Ferdinand's torture, experiences illusion and loss as physical pain. Ultimately, however, *The Duchess of Malfi* positions the human mind as the root of the physical experience of pain.

The Duchess of Malfi meticulously composes stage space, character, and bodies with explicit attention to the relationship between exteriors and interiors. Using both the physical presence of bodies onstage and a deeply layered network of language, the play's opening scenes actually encourage and model a way to imagine; the play repeatedly enacts a zoom-in

---

[122] Gail Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 10.

[123] While I emphasize the *dis*embodiment of pain in this play, critics have frequently read the body in *The Duchess of Malfi* as emblematic of social or political phenomena. Katherine Rowe provides a run-down of such criticism in "'That Curious Engine': Action at a Distance in *The Duchess of Malfi,*" the third chapter in her book, *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern*. She highlights Peter Stallybrass's Bakhtinian reading of the grotesque body, as well as Theodora Jankowski and Kathleen McLuskie's feminist analysis of the female grotesque as a challenge to patriarchy in the play. For Rowe, the body, and in particular the hand, serves as a symbol for agency and intent.

effect by which characters in the play, and ultimately members of an audience, refocus attention from surfaces and exteriors toward the sometimes murky abstraction of interiority.[124] This performative zooming-in introduces a perspectival shift in how to imagine the relationship between the inside and outside of the body, and in particular, between the body and the mind.

With its repeated references to layers of concealment, from hidden marriage and secret pregnancy to its deeply complicated matrix of espionage and spying, the play also constructs *physical space* with a focus on inwardness and interiority. In "The Landscape of Imagination in *The Duchess of Malfi,*" Leslie Duer describes the play as a "claustrophobic" landscape. She notes that, with the exception of the "Echo" scene, the onstage action occurs either inside or at night; the horror and violence that the audience witnesses onstage are a result of the mirroring and distorting of this dark and "inner wilderness."[125] The play's various inside spaces, which different characters repeatedly call a “prison” and a “hell,” serve as the macrocosm to reflect the microcosm of subjective inner space and act as a reflection of the play's exploration of interiority in all its horrific possibility. In fact, the inwardly focused settings, or *places*, comprise just one element of the play’s framework, which is repeatedly and emphatically focused upon the construction of interiority. The

---

[124] Jean-Paul Sartre suggests in *The Psychology of Imagination* (London: Methuen & Company, 1972), "verbal signs are not the intermediaries between pure meanings and our consciousness, as they are, for instance, in the case of mathematics: they represent the area of contact between us and the imaginary world." While audience members at a performance would all make different points of contact with such an imaginary world, the physical, embodied, enacted qualities of performance enhance and strengthen connections between signifiers and the "imagined" (70).

[125] Leslie Duer, "The Landscape of Imagination in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Modern Language Studies*, 10:1 (Winter 1979): 3-9.

language of the characters continually returns to metaphorical meditations on inwardness and the vulnerability of the body. Webster's play, through its compulsive return to metaphors, descriptions, and settings that explore the inside versus the outside, directs its focus on the relationships between the body and the mind and their perceptions of external reality, in what has been called a "container schema."[126] Essentially, the play structures physical space in terms of an inside/outside paradigm as a means to structure and understand other, less concrete spaces, such as the mind and the interior experience of a human body.

The first act of the play carefully constructs imagery of enclosed places within enclosed places, creating a kind of nesting-doll effect of increasingly confined inner spaces. In the first lines of the play, Delio welcomes Antonio home: he has returned to Italy after an extended stay in France. Delio associates France with foreignness, with the "outside" when he says to Antonio, "you return / A very formal Frenchman in your habit" (1.1.2-3). However, though with outsider or foreign trappings, Antonio has returned to the fold of the familiar, his homeland. In his comparison of a state to a body in the following lines, Antonio further emphasizes his return to the insularity of court. He predicts of the state, "if't chance / Some cursed example poison 't near the head, / Death, and diseases through the whole land spread" (1.1.14-15). While a familiar trope of the early modern period, Antonio's reference to the state as a body imagines a body whose insides may be "poisoned" by corruption. Interestingly, while poison usually enters from outside the body (as in Hamlet Senior's

[126] My discussion of the "container" schema, or the inside-outside paradigm, has been greatly influenced by the work of Mary Thomas Crane in *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). In particular, her discussion of *Hamlet* considers the way that the play is organized around the principal of "inside and outside" to explore how "various versions of the ways in which the inner self comes into being delineate different relationships between the self, its actions, and its environment" (116).

case), Antonio immediately entertains the possibility that the poison may actually begin within, "near the head." The place of the court of Malfi is quickly revealed to be such a poisoned body. Bosola, an ambitious former soldier, is commissioned by the Duchess's cunning brothers to "observe" their sister, and to maintain a "garb of melancholy" so that he may "gain access" to her "private lodgings" (1.1.269-272). Bosola's surveillance duties require him to penetrate the interior of the castle, to access the inside spaces of the Duchess's rooms, and ultimately, to gain knowledge of her most private space, her bed. The places of this claustrophobic landscape are thus aligned with inwardness, but also with vulnerability to physical penetration and corruptability.

Imagery of interiority and penetration as they relate to physical place frame the way that the play structures character. Like the court itself, Bosola and the siblings, Ferdinand, the Cardinal, and the Duchess, are each introduced in terms of their interiors. Perhaps inspired by his new worldly outsider's perspective, Antonio assesses each character's inner self in comparison to his or her exterior appearance or performance. Bosola is immediately characterized by his melancholy; of his discontent, Antonio predicts: "This foul melancholy / Will poison all his goodness for, I'll tell you, / If too immoderate sleep be truly said / To be an inward rust unto the soul, / It then doth follow want of action / Breeds all black malcontents, and their close rearing" (1.1.71-76). So, while Bosola is distraught that Ferdinand and the Cardinal refuse to reward his past service, melancholy itself works as the "poison" within him. Further, lack of action and sleep cause "inward" decay; essentially, as with the state, Bosola's poisoning occurs from *within*.

Similarly, Antonio diagnoses the inner states of the Cardinal and Ferdinand. He suggests that Delio "observe" the "inner character" of the Cardinal, which he then judges

based upon the Cardinal's physical appearance and gestures. The Cardinal's face, or exterior, he suggests, "is nothing but the engendering of toads" (1.1.151). Toads (which were considered to be poisonous), "flatterers," "atheists," and "political monsters," are the progeny of this man; again, the body is the source of poison. As for Ferdinand, Antonio claims that he has a "most perverse, and turbulent nature: / What appears in him mirth, is merely outside / If he laugh heartily, it is to laugh / All honesty out of fashion" (1.1.160-163). Antonio conceives of Ferdinand's perversity as "natural" and internal, a sharp contrast to any outward display of good humor. Both the Cardinal and Ferdinand display a certain discontinuity: their outward performances contradict their inner corruption.[127] However, with almost x-ray perception, Antonio is able to see and assess inner character based upon actions and language.

Antonio's analysis of the Duchess, unlike that of her brothers and Bosola, aligns her inner character with her outward appearance. He describes her thus:

> her discourse, it is so full of rapture,
> You only will begin then to be sorry
> When she doth end her speech . . .
> ...Whilst she speaks,
> She throws upon a man so sweet a look,
> That it were able raise one to a galliard
> That lay in a dead palsy...
> ...but in that look

[127] Henderson argues that the Cardinal and Ferdinand both represent aristocratic "actors" who oppress their audience, including the Duchess, who represents a "self" that is destroyed by her brothers' power. The brothers use theater as a destructive force; however, she continues, "theater for the Duchess is not something to lose oneself in or be defined by; rather, it provides a touchstone, an outer border against which the realm of oneself and one's own concerns can be understood" (199). While I agree that theater is used as a tool of power within the play, it is also important to recognize that the Duchess continually attempts to articulate her "self" in the face of her oppressors. Further, it is vital to consider that the Duchess's experience, much like Ferdinand's imaginings of torture, demonstrates the absolutely real impact of both imagination and theatrical representation upon the body and mind.

There speaketh so divine a continence
As cuts off all lascivious and vain hope.
1.1.181-191

The Duchess's virtue and beauty are described twice in terms of language: her discourse itself possesses the power to captivate and amaze, but her gaze, too, "speaketh" of her inner nobility. While Antonio's praise of her "continence" suggests her moderation and virtue, the word also implies her bodily control and her sexual purity. The purity communicated by her external appearance is only confirmed and validated by her speech, which Antonio associates with the "inner" Duchess. Likewise, the brothers associate the "outer," or physical/sexual virtue of the Duchess, as intimately linked to her inner purity. They warn her that getting married again will have bodily ramifications indicative of sin, such as a "spotted liver" (1.1.289), and further warn her that she lives "in a rank pasture here i'th' court; / There is a kind of honey-dew that's deadly: / 'Twill poison your fame" (1.1.296-298). Ferdinand and the Cardinal envision the environment of the Duchess's court to be a poisonous "pasture," or enclosure, and their sister to be a kind of penned in, vulnerable animal. Specifically, the Duchess's sexual and—by association—moral purity is constantly and insidiously threatened; sexual penetration, in their minds, ruins her inherent value, just as it is intimately linked to her reputation in the "outside" world.[128]

[128] As critics such as Katharine Eisaman Maus and Linda Charnes have pointed out, the very possibility of a woman's secrecy, or "inwardness," is threatening to men in early modern drama. However, unlike Desdemona (in Maus's discussion), who is *not* false, and Cressida (in Charnes's discussion), who *is* false, the Duchess walks a fine line: while she is indeed secretive in her marriage to Antonio, her actions are, as Ken Jackson argues, constructed to elicit the sympathy and pity of the audience. However, like Desdemona and Othello, "the mere fact that [she] possesses a 'discourse of thought'" to which her brother is "not privy" drives Ferdinand into a frenzy (Charnes 123). See Linda Charnes, "'So Unsecret to Ourselves': Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 4 (Winter, 1989): 413-440; Ken Jackson, *Separate Theaters: Bethlam ('Bedlam') Hospital and the Shakespearean Stage* (Newark:

Ultimately, Antonio presents his analysis of the siblings and Bosola as if he were getting an inside look at character. Though the Cardinal and Ferdinand's outward appearances and positions of public power, as well as Bosola's obeisance, contradict each man's inner corruption, Antonio's extended analysis of these contradictions forefronts the play's perspectival focus. As observers, the audience, like Antonio, must look beyond exteriors to assess the interior composition of each character. Slowly, the play manipulates and peels back the exteriors of its characters to provide a stark, and sometimes horrific picture of the human mind. The metaphors of inwardness and interiority in the opening scenes of the play construct for an audience a method of perceiving character; they direct the focus toward the "inside." At a surface level, Antonio's appeal to Delio to "observe" the brothers' "inner character" actually models for the audience a way to see: actions and language, according to Antonio, are clues to the inner workings of the subjects onstage. However, Antonio's methods reveal a sophisticated conceptualization of the relationship between signifier and signified; each word, gesture, or facial expression may be interpreted multiply. A good observer, according to Antonio, looks beyond the obvious to perceive submerged meaning.

The metaphorical mapping of interiority and inwardness in the play's first act produces an "image schema," a gestalt of sensory experience that becomes stored in the outlines of memory.[129] According to F. Elizabeth Hart, the embodied and "physical sense of

---

University of Delaware Press, 2005), 183-203; and Katharine Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 104-127.

[129] In "Performance, Phenomenology, and the Cognitive Turn," F. Elizabeth Hart describes the theory of knowledge-acquisition described by Lakoff, Johnson, Raymond Gibbs, Mark Turner, Gilles Fauconnier, and others: "kinesthetic and perceptual interactions between the human body and its physical environments generate cognitive structures that reflect the

having an interior as well as an exterior to our bodies leads us to project in/out design into countless intangible domains."[130] The physical experience of having an inside and an outside constructs a cognitive frame often referred to as the "container" schema; this schema structures high-level cognition by "metaphorical projection"–the brain can assimilate and categorize both new and familiar information using this cognitive frame. For example, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, the inside/outside paradigm begins quite literally to structure plot and character; the audience conceptualizes the physical relationship between inside and outside of Malfi, of court, and of the Duchess's chambers. Using this frame as a foundation, the play then leads the audience into abstract, "new" territory, building upon this initially simple relationship between inside and outside to develop complex possibilities of human interiority. Webster's play repeatedly maps the outside/inside framework, layer upon layer, formulating the state, architecture, and character, including the body and the mind, in terms of this paradigm. As Hart argues, "the textual/verbal dimension of performance—far from operating at an essentially different level from processes of nonverbal conceptualization—actually works in tandem with those nonverbal processes to generate spatially inflected meaning."[131] As a performance, *The Duchess of Malfi* indeed creates "spatially inflected meaning": the verbal dimension of performance particularly directs the audience to conceptualize and imagine the *inside* of human subjects. Ultimately, the work of this zooming-in prepares the audience to imagine the horrors of the play, which lack the stability

---

outlines of those environments and that serve in turn as the templates for higher-level cognition" (Hart, in McConachie and Hart, 37).

[130] Ibid., 37.

[131] Ibid., 40.

and "reality" of physical signifiers and are constructed totally upon language, illusion, and imagination.

The language of the play continually and almost obsessively constructs the *exterior* of the human body as vulnerable and disposable. In particular, directly following the first act's repeated play with the "inside-outside" paradigm, Bosola begins the second act with a gruesome meditation on the human body. He launches into a seemingly unprovoked diatribe, directed at an Old Lady and Castrucchio, a minor character and a cuckold. He says, "I do wonder you do not / loathe yourselves. Observe my meditation now: / What thing is in this outward form of man / To be beloved?" (2.1.39-42). He goes on to marvel at how "man stands amazed to see his deformity / In any other creature but himself. / But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases / Which have their true names ta'en from beasts... / Though we are eaten up of lice and worms, / And though continually we bear about us / A rotten and dead body, we delight / To hide it in rich tissue" (2.46-54). In Bosola's configuration, the living body is grotesque, diseased, permeable, and always already decaying; however, the great trick of humanity is to "hide" and deny this vulnerability and to mask the true horror of the body behind "rich tissue." While this "rich tissue" may be the elaborate bathing, grooming, and clothing rituals that humans employ to ornament themselves into difference from animals, Bosola may also allude to the fantasy that the skin, in reality a soft and penetrable "tissue" (which Bosola later calls "puff-paste" (4.2.120), is a strong, substantial, or "rich" barrier between the external world and the inside of our bodies.[132] This speech

[132] Bosola's speech invites the audience to imagine the surface of the body as a rich tissue and a rotten, flimsy cover to a host of internal processes and deteriorations that we cannot see. As Drew Leder suggests in *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), "the body conceals itself precisely in the act of revealing what is Other" (22). Leder's phenomenological conception of the body suggests that an aspect of embodiment is the

engages a perspectival shift about the body's surfaces in relation to its interior spaces; the decaying interface of the body's surface with the outside world conceals an interior that is "eaten up" and diseased.

Bosola's speech, directed at the Old Woman and Castrucchio, but also towards an audience, delivers a sharp directive in how to re-focus attention to one's own body. Scarry describes the experience of "dreaming by the book," a phrase she uses to think about the ways in which imagination, inspired by reading, mirrors "deep structures of perception."[133] She notes, "imagining is an act of perceptual mimesis, whether undertaken in our own daydreams or under the instruction of great writers. And the question is: how does it come about that this perceptual mimesis, which when undertaken on one's own is ordinarily feeble and impoverished, when under authorial instruction sometimes closely approximates actual perception?"[134] Rather than "authorial instruction" to guide imagination, Bosola leads the audience's imagination with *performative* instruction. Bosola engages the audience in a parallel imaginative activity to Scarry's "dreaming by the book," a kind of imagining that is specifically structured and directed by the language and actions onstage. Each member of the audience, already primed by the first act to *notice* the relationships between external and internal character, is now attuned to the surfaces and vulnerabilities of his or her particular body. Bosola's repeated use of "we" draws together the audience, the actors, and the world

---

concealment of internal bodily operations behind the interface of the body's exterior with the outside world. This interface is what society sees, and also the surface that mediates between inner self and Other. He suggests that "my body surface envelops a hidden mass of internal organs and processes. The visceral functions that unfold in these bodily depths are crucial for sustaining my life" (36). Webster's play explores the possible structures of these "bodily depths."

[133] Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Fararr, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 9.

[134] Ibid., 6.

beyond the theater; “we” all may construct meaning from his diatribe about the body because we all inhabit such a physical form. The “deep structure of perception” that Bosola calls upon is the embodied experience of recognizing the relationship between the body's surface and the imperceptible and possibly horrifying processes that lie beneath this surface.

The inside/outside metaphorical map of the play's beginning, enhanced by Bosola's speech, constructs a paradigm for thinking about and imagining that which we cannot "see." The dramatic structure of *The Duchess of Malfi* relies almost entirely upon undisplayable moments to create the effect of horror. As I will discuss, Ferdinand's maniacal rant and the Duchess's experience of torture both concoct incredible imagery of pain and horror through language. In order for this drama to "work," audiences must engage with and become engaged by a world of horror that they cannot see onstage; that is, the diabolical imagery of Ferdinand's plans to torture the Duchess does not include a staged depiction of his twisted fantasies, but rather his fantasies must become "real" to the audience through engagement with such fantasy.[135] Bosola's description of the body in its continual state of decay prepares an audience to imagine the body destroyed, as in Ferdinand's fantasy.

---

[135] In "John Webster in the Modern Theatre," *Educational Theatre Journal* 17, No. 4 (Dec. 1965): 314-321, Don D. Moore wonders if the repeated failures of modern performances of *The Duchess of Malfi* may be "because we as audiences lack the proper historical imagination" (314). Twentieth-century critics have routinely panned performances of this play because of its absurdly comic effect, especially in the final scene, when Antonio, the Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola all die. Time and again, the "stack" of bloody bodies at the end of the play has left audiences "twittering." According to Moore, the successful productions of the play hinge entirely upon Ferdinand's performance, and upon the Duchess's convincing enactment of her inward torture. Moore's performance history of the play clearly suggests that the horrific and tragic tone of the play, at least for a modern audience, relies upon the *unseen* elements of horror; the visual representations of horror may, it seems, become a distraction to the imagination. Despite the capacity of the eye to temporarily distract the mind, the mind's ability to engage with horror is far greater than the eye's ability to perceive it.

Further, the play ultimately asks the audience to imagine fictional experiences of pain and torture in ways that mimic how we must *always* use imagination to understand pain. Pain in our own bodies is constantly at a remove from ourselves; it is "the seed of body-self division."[136] As Scarry and Drew Leder have both noticed, to express pain we objectify our bodies (the body becomes alien to us when we describe pain, or the body-part in pain, as "it" rather than "I"); we must approximate and estimate, using the body, in our attempts to locate and particularize pain; and finally, we use simile or metaphor to describe what we experience ("I feel like a nail is being driven into my skull"). Our best methods to make others realize our pain, or to convince others to believe our pain is "real," are through layers of metaphor and comparison. These methods become especially crucial when the body does not "prove" the pain by demonstrating evidence of physical rupture or breakage.

The pain of others is even less accessible; pain is never something that we can "see" in others. We can witness violence or torture, but we cannot physically perceive pain. As Scarry suggests, "when one hears about another person's physical pain, the events happening within the interior of that person's body may seem to have the remote character of some deep subterranean fact, belonging to an invisible geography that, however, portentous, has no reality."[137] How do we know that pain is "real" if we can't see it? What makes something "real" if there is no physical evidence? Pain famously resists language; as Scarry so compellingly argues, "pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language."[138] Because pain eludes

---

[136] Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 70.

[137] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 3.

[138] Ibid., 4. Drew Leder and David Morris also note the ways in which pain evades language.

language and evades a specific physical reference point (pain's spatial ambiguity can be seen, for instance, in the way a heart attack may be felt in the arm), the verbal sign, when signifying pain, is "inherently unstable," which allows the language of pain to be adapted, misappropriated, or borrowed.[139] Scarry's discussion in particular articulates the ways in which the invisibility and instability of pain leads to its misappropriation for use in torture and war. While Scarry outlines the destructive capabilities of converting real pain into fictions of political and social power, I would like to reverse that formulation to consider the way that pain's "subterranean" quality actually aids in the *power of fiction*. Webster exploits the performative possibilities of pain as an unseen, unstable imaginative force to increase and multiply dramatic power. *The Duchess of Malfi* capitalizes on the instability of the sign to create horror; without a physical signifier of pain, the audience may potentially expand and create greater horror in their own imaginations than could ever be represented on a live stage.[140]

---

[139] See Leder's discussion of "the recessive body" in *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 36-42. Theorists who tackle the problem of pain constantly encounter this very problem of finding its location, or origin; while both medical science, philosophy and the arts frequently strive to locate the *place* of pain, pain is spatially ambiguous. The phenomenon that he talks about, which he calls dys-appearance, is characterized by "problematic or disharmonious" experiences, which lead to an individual feeling that his body is "away" or alien, out of his/her control.

[140] Conversely, if an audience does not, or cannot "buy in" to the performance, the abstract quality of pain may actually produce the opposite effect: an audience may disbelieve or fail to empathize with the experience of pain onstage. I will discuss this possibility more fully in Chapter 4. Regardless, the play repeatedly emphasizes the human mind's *ability* to become captivated and convinced by images of pain, and the potential for imagined pain to produce physical response (specifically, as I will discuss, in the cases of the Duchess and Ferdinand). Webster creates a world in which subjective experience, internal capability, and mental functioning can and do operate independently from, and at times may dictate, the functions of the body.

While the trajectory of horror in *The Duchess of Malfi* culminates in many dead bodies, the journey itself is markedly *not* focused upon the visible body; violence and torture occur without the physical referents of human blood, open flesh, or severed limbs. The story of pain in this play is told through the narration of mental experience; however, although pain exists primarily within the mind, it is nonetheless *real* pain. Post-Cartesian treatment of pain has typically understood the body to be the site of pain, but David Morris suggests that the separation of physical and mental pain into distinct categories is an artificial modern differentiation. Further, "the experience of pain is also shaped by such powerful cultural forces as gender, religion, and social class."[141] For instance, this play's early modern imaginative construction of pain relies heavily upon the iconography of hell. *The Duchess of Malfi* experiments with the categories of reality and illusion, substance and absence but ultimately indicates that pain, even when it is constructed within the imagination or invisible to others, is a substantial and real "hell" to the subject who feels it. In so doing, the play explores what human subjects conceal within and how the workings of interiority interact with and impact the outer world.

In *Inwardness and the Theater in the English Renaissance*, Katharine Eisaman Maus suggests, "the English Renaissance stage seems deliberately to foster theatergoers' capacity to use partial and limited presentations as a basis for conjecture about what is undisplayed or undisplayable. Its spectacles are understood to depend upon and indicate the shapes of things unseen."[142] Maus's statement directly applies to a scenario such as the rape of Lavinia

---

[141] David Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 20.

[142] Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 32.

in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*; the language and action that comprise performance surrounding the moment of rape give shape to the "undisplayable" action of rape and the ravished form of Lavinia's body. Quintus and Martius's dialogue about a “detested, dark, blood-drinking pit” provides parallel imagery to Lavinia's vaginal wounds during the moment of her rape; Lavinia's mangled body signifies and reminds of her ravishment through the remainder of the play; the repetitive re-telling of her rape constructs and reconstructs for the audience this missing piece in the narrative. In the case of *Titus,* theatrical language and the action of performance *stand in* for, or signify, specific physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences that take place in the narrative.

In Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, however, "limited presentations" in performance are based *not* on undisplayable moments in the narrative; the body in pain is not even a physical reality onstage in this play. So while language about pain in *Titus* is used as an attempt to explain or understand the *thing* of Lavinia's body, language about pain in *The Duchess* continually refers back to the abstract, to the productions of imagination. Webster transforms the possibilities of unseen violence and the infliction of pain; without the referent of a physical, staged body, the play creates a pallet for the seemingly limitless imagined possibilities for a human being to inflict, and experience, pain.[143]

In the second act, when Ferdinand discovers that his sister has taken a lover and birthed secret children, his rage inspires his imagination towards visions of committing violence and inflicting extraordinary physical pain. Instigated by a letter from Bosola

[143] In *Fictional Minds*, Alan Palmer suggests that "every story contains ontological gaps" that do not show an audience something that they are supposed to assume about the story (34). While early modern drama generally produces a physical signifier (like a body) to produce the story-world for an audience, Webster's *Duchess* is a departure from this mode. Much of the dramatic work of the play takes place in a negotiation between first and third person narration rather than in concrete, physical objects onstage.

confirming the birth of the Duchess's son, Ferdinand is "grown mad with't" (2.5.3). The act of reading catapults the jealous brother into a rampage of wild imagining. He fixates on his sister's sexuality (she is "grown a notorious strumpet" [2.5.3]), her secrecy ("She hath had most cunning bawds to serve her turn, / And more secure conveyances for lust / Than towns of garrison for service" [2.5.9-11]), and finally, the infection of their royal bloodline that results from her perceived bawdry (he wishes to "purge infected blood, blood such as hers" [2.5.26]). Ferdinand's train of thought performs the proliferation of imaginative possibility out of relatively simple “literal” acts. Antonio inadvertently drops a letter announcing the birth of his child, which prompts Bosola to write a letter to the Duchess's brothers. But Ferdinand's inflated rage, upon reading the letter, spawns his imaginings of sex, violence, and the infliction of pain. His rage and his imagination, in performance, are enacted and constructed through language, which, when communicated to an audience, inspires individual, varied responses and imaginings of sex, violence, and the infliction of pain. This chain of communication is not founded upon a specific physical signifier, but relies upon the production and reproduction of imagined pain. How does Ferdinand imagine? How are acts of torture and bodily injury constructed through language? What does this kind of imagining *do* in a performance? How are products of the mind, or the imagination, and pain related in this play?

In the scene of his maniacal rant, Webster presents Ferdinand's mind to the audience. The audience has already gleaned the third person perspective of Ferdinand's mind from the observations of Antonio; the audience, as I have discussed, has been primed to consider the

inner workings of character, mind, and body.[144] Here, Ferdinand contributes a first-person rendering of the workings of his imagination. The content of his rant is focused upon his desire to torture his sister for her secret promiscuity; however, rather than focus upon his own anger and the reasons behind it, he illustrates vivid imagery of the pain he would like to inflict upon her body.

In act 2, scene 5, Ferdinand unfolds the state of his mind and perspective and communicates his intentions to his brother, the Cardinal, as well as to the audience. Sex is a primary train of thought for Ferdinand in this scene; in particular, he is preoccupied with visions of his *sister's* sexuality. At first, he articulates his distress about the reputation that she has earned with others: "Read there," he says to the Cardinal, "a sister damned; she is loose i'th' hilts, / Grown a notorious strumpet" (2.5.3-4). His first thought is of her public reputation; she has "grown" "notorious," and her reputation has therefore exceeded the limits of the private domain to become public knowledge. She is "damned," in part, because of the notoriety of her sexual relationship. The letter serves as evidence to Ferdinand, substantial proof for the speculations that ensue. His escalating tirade models for the audience the way in which one piece of information, in this case the physical object of the letter, may instigate and inspire a proliferation of fantasies. From his distress over the Duchess's reputation, he turns to his anger at her secrecy: "O confusion seize her! / She hath had most cunning bawds to serve her turn, / And more secure conveyances for lust / Than towns of garrison for service" (2.5.8-11). Ferdinand curses the security of her clandestine relationship, as well as

[144] Palmer suggests that while first-person narrative is usually privileged in narrative theory to construct the fictional mind, third person narrative can be just as enlightening (*Fictional Minds*,125-127). While Ferdinand's wild talk provides much insight into his fictional mind, the descriptions and reactions of Bosola, Antonio, and the Cardinal are equally important in fleshing out his character. Additionally, the play's attunement to looking "inside" has encouraged the audience to make its own assessments about his mind and its character.

those who helped her to keep the secret. In performance, Ferdinand's anger highlights the fact that he is the last to know. The audience, already privy to Antonio and the Duchess's private vows, becomes aligned with the "cunning bawds" who have secured their secret.

Ferdinand's language further penetrates his preoccupation with the Duchess's sex life as the scene continues. From his rage at the public nature of her reputation, he turns towards the private. He tells his baffled brother, "We must not now use balsamum, but fire, / The smarting cupping-glass, for that's the mean / To purge infected blood, such blood as hers" (2.5.24-26). The Duchess herself has been "infected" by copulation with a presumably inferior body; further, the royal blood-line, he fears, has been infected by hybrid progeny. Almost as if he's talking himself into hysteria, Ferdinand engages even more deeply with his fantasy; he goes on to actually picture his sister in the act of sex. He says, "Methinks I see her laughing, / Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat, quickly, / Or my imagination will carry me / To see her in the shameful act of sin" (2.5.38-41). The act of talking about sex has drawn Ferdinand further towards a vivid vision of the scene that angers him: while he "sees" the dangerous possibility of further imagining and asks his brother to distract him, the Cardinal actually provokes him. The Cardinal questions "who" Ferdinand "sees" in a sexual act with his sister, and Ferdinand replies: "Haply with some strong thighed bargeman, / Or one o'th' wood-yard, that can quoit a sledge, / Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire / That carries coals up to her privy lodgings" (2.5.42-45). With specificity, Ferdinand describes a range of possibilities for the perpetrator/lover. Finally, Ferdinand seemingly thrusts himself into a deeper perception of reality as he speaks directly to the illusion of his sister. He says, "Go to, mistress! / 'Tis not your whore's milk that shall quench my wild-fire, / But your whore's blood" (2.5.47-48). Ferdinand has talked himself into such a vivid mental

picture that he addresses his sister directly; his language literally conjures a “real” vision of her in his mind.

While the Cardinal and the audience cannot share Ferdinand’s vivid illusion of the Duchess, the evolution of his mental process in this scene has important implications for the relationship between language, imagination, and embodiment. Ferdinand’s language, his act of talking about the Duchess and her secret sex life, actually invokes a representation (granted one only he can see) of what he believes to be his sister. Both the acts of reading (the letter) and talking in this scene fuel imagination, which in turn engenders images so vivid that they appear to be real; in fact, to Ferdinand, the illusion *is* real to *him*. Ferdinand’s rant, though absolutely beyond “reason” (in the Cardinal’s words), demonstrates the generative potential of the mind. Further, the scene suggests the possibility of the mind’s ability to simulate, or even create, physical reality.

As Ferdinand's speech progresses, his language zooms in from his anxiety about public, objective opinions of his sister toward the intensely personal and subjective experience of an imagined conversation with her. Likewise, his language moves, as his anger heightens, towards increasingly specific, bodily imagery of torturing the Duchess. Ferdinand first conceives of injuring thus: "Here's the cursed day / To prompt my memory, and here 't shall stick / Till of her bleeding heart I make a sponge / To wipe it out" (2.5.13-16). While the bleeding heart is indeed a vivid bodily image, it detaches the act of violence from the experience of pain. In this line, Ferdinand articulates his intention to hurt with the objective of healing his own choler. After a brief interruption from the Cardinal, Ferdinand progresses towards a more specific, embodied description of violence, and his own role in such torture. He suggests that he wishes he could become a tempest, "That I might toss her

palace 'bout her ears, / Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads, / And lay her general territory a waste / As she hath done her honours" (2.5.18-21). Here, Ferdinand imagines his sister's body parts as places to destroy: the concrete images of "palace," "forests," "meads," and "general territory" replace particular limbs or orifices with suggestive landscape imagery. Here, the use of "palace" as a metaphor for a body part constructs the idea of the breaking of priveledged space as well as the disruption of inside/outside boundaries. Ferdinand's association between the Duchess's body and non-sentient objects such as "forests" or "meads" provides imagery of objective *things* as an entrance point for sharing his ideas of bodily destruction.[145] Not only does this landscape imagery suggest Ferdinand's ability to literally objectify his sister's body in his mind, but it produces a point of reference to begin imagining such astonishing acts of injuring her body as object for his audience (the Cardinal) and the audience in general.

Several lines later in the scene, after interruptions by the Cardinal and a digression towards Ferdinand's preoccupation with sex, Ferdinand's language links back to his idea of "rooting up" the Duchess's "goodly forests" with the continued metaphor of his sister's body as a tree. First, he suggests that he would like to give his handkerchief to "her bastard" "to make soft lint for his mother's wounds, / When I have hewed her to pieces" (2.5.29-30). Here, for the first time, he articulates the connection between his violent action ("hewing")

[145] Scarry suggests that when confronted with the essentially unspeakable experience of pain, humans rely on "artifacts," or material things, to displace or substantiate pure sentience–we try to associate the abstraction of sentience with the solidity of objects (*Body in Pain*, 280). She suggests that we endow "interior sensory events with a metaphysical referent….the making of what is originally interior and private into something exterior and sharable, and, conversely, the reabsorption of what is now exterior and shareable into the intimate recesses of individual consciousness…" (284). Webster's play, again, exploits this way that people must imagine pain to expand and multiply the possibilities for an audience to envision horror.

and his sister's physical experience of "wounds"; the action of "hewing" again relates the body to a tree that he will chop or dismember. He goes on, several lines later: "Foolish men, / That e'er will trust their honour in a bark / Made of so slight, weak bulrush as is woman, / Apt every minute to sink it!" (2.5.33-36). While the word "bark" here may refer to a small boat, it is also suggestive of the bark of a tree, an outside surface reminiscent of skin; weaker than bark, however, is the "bulrush" that Ferdinand imagines as his sister's skin. Again he associates the body of his sister, and the injury that he will cause it, to violence upon a non-sentient object; while an audience may have difficulty actually envisioning the tearing of flesh and hewing of limbs that Ferdinand desires, people may more explicitly imagine the mundane actions of injury when they are overlayed upon a non-feeling object. Ferdinand guides the imaginations of his audience with concrete, objective imagery of physical destruction that they can all "see."

After the climactic outburst of the scene, in which Ferdinand conjures and directly addresses the illusion of the Duchess, he finally outlines his specific ideas for how he will injure her body. He says,

> I would have [the bodies of the Duchess, her lover, and their child]
> Burnt in a coal-pit, with the ventage stopped,
> That their cursed smoke might not ascend to heaven;
> Or dip the sheets they lie in, in pitch and sulphur,
> Wrap them in't, and then light them like a match;
> Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis,
> And give't his lecherous father, to renew
> The sin of his back. (2.5.68-74)

Ferdinand's ultimate fantasy clearly invokes both particular bodily injury and imagery of hell. He articulates the actions (burning, setting on fire, boiling a human body), actor (himself), and victims (his sister, her lover, and their son). His vision engages a multi-sensory image: the tactile experience of flesh burning; the smell of sulphur; the taste of

human; and of course, the visual images of coal, smoke, fire, and bodily destruction. The scene moves the descriptions of torture from a detached, yet bleeding heart, towards descriptions of violence upon the objectified body as tree or landscape, to this last powerful image of bodies destroyed. With this graphic, evolving description, Webster moves to the heart of Ferdinand's horrific fantasy. Just he talked and imagined his way from a detached and objective perspective of sex toward an intensely subjective and realistic image thereof, Ferdinand's imagination zooms in towards an explicit vision of torture in this scene.

While I have discussed the overarching imagery of this short scene in *The Duchess of Malfi*, it is equally important to consider the construction of the dialogue in Webster's shaping of imagination. The Cardinal and Ferdinand are the only people onstage in this scene and the dialogue jumps between them. While Ferdinand begins with a statement of his anger ("I have this night digged up a mandrake") (2.5.1) and progresses towards increasingly specific and graphic images of sex and torture, the Cardinal responds to each of Ferdinand's escalating exclamations with mostly one-line responses, primarily questions, such as, "Say you?" "Is't possible? "Can this be certain?" and most pointedly, "Are you stark mad?" Ferdinand's language produces, with almost filmic effect, a flip-book of increasingly graphic images, interspersed with the relative stability of the Cardinal's responses. Ferdinand's language shows his imagination and invokes the imagination of the audience to lurch from anger, to sex, to violence, to sex, to the pain infliction, to sex, to even more vivid detail of pain infliction, and so on. This scene not only uncovers the working of Ferdinand's mind, but it models a way of thinking about thinking, or thinking about minds. Just as the discussion of character and place in the opening scenes of the play models for the audience a way to see, or zoom-in on character, this scene displays a way to understand and penetrate

dynamic and changing thought; it also models the way that imagination can become so engaged that its productions seem like reality.

Ferdinand models thought but also ignites the imaginings and fantasies that the entire experience of this theatrical event may produce. As Bruce McConachie argues in *Engaging Audiences*, theater is not "primarily a one-way delivery system of messages or fantasies that audiences respond to."[146] Rather, an audience brings social cognition to the theater so that we may "read the minds" of the actors "to intuit their beliefs, intentions, and emotions by watching their motor actions."[147] McConachie argues that an onstage character can invite the audience to share his or her perspective through language in addition to gesture and facial cues. Further, as critics such as McConachie, Elizabeth Hart, Mary Crane, and Arthur Glenberg emphasize, the operations of our brains' mirror neurons deeply impact theatrical experience. Our mirror neurons cause the motor activity in our brains to respond when we see another person take an action; for instance, if I *see* someone kick a wall, my brain fires in the same places as it would if I physically kicked the wall. Cognitive research indicates that when the brain hears a verb (like Ferdinand's threat to "hew"), not only will the left temporal lobe (associated with language production) and the frontal lobe (associated with speech production) be activated, but the areas of the brain *associated with motor activity* will also be stimulated. Therefore, theater's incorporation of visual stimulation (gesture, movement) and language actually engage the brains of the audience to simulate actions, or to "catch" the actions of a fictional character's mind. Regardless of whether a situation is imagined or fictitious, audience members can "catch" emotions and "simulate the

[146] McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 3.

[147] Ibid., 65.

experiences of actor/characters in their own minds."[148] A theatrical production of *The Duchess of Malfi* lacks physical representation of the horrors of Ferdinand's mind, but as McConachie argues, the audience's ability to "catch" Ferdinand's thoughts may actually generate greater possibilities for horror in audience members' various imaginations. The body (our own and those of others) informs both our mental processes and our perception, just as our imaginations directly construct physical experience.[149]

Ferdinand's language employs metaphor to bridge the disparity between his own visualizations of pain infliction and horror and the imaginations of the audience. Ferdinand's fantasies represent not only that which could not be effectively displayed onstage but imagery of bodily destruction that is difficult, if not impossible, for people to incorporate or understand. Webster grounds these images in metaphor to give horror a concrete shape. As I.E. Richards suggests, metaphor is a gestalt, an "emergent whole" whose properties "inhere in no single part but emerge when the parts constitute the whole."[150] The metaphors of the body as landscape, and then of hell, structure imagined torture and resulting pain as an emergent whole that derives from the dynamic interaction of various parts.

First, the language in this scene constructs imagery of bodily injury using metaphors of the body as landscape, or tree. When Ferdinand suggests that he would like to "toss her palace 'bout her ears, / Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads" (18-19), the semantic

---

[148] Ibid., 66.

[149] Following from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy, in *The Phenomenological Mind,* Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi suggest that the body shapes both our cognitive experiences and our perception; this assertion both complicates and elaborates on Norman Doidge's claim that, "pain, like the body image, is created by the brain and projected onto the body" (190).

[150] Joseph Glicksohn and Chanita Goodblatt, "From Practical Criticism to the Practice of Literary Criticism." *Poetics Today* 24, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 213.

field of the destruction of land and the action of deforestation overlaps with that of ripping a body apart. As Glicksohn and Goodblatt argue, an audience's ability to comprehend a metaphor "is akin to problem solving and involves an act of perceptual and semantic restructuring."[151] How might an audience problem solve the metaphor of a body as a tree? The fantasy of ripping his sister's body open and chopping her to pieces is overlayed with imagery of destroying landscape, plundering the earth, and cutting down trees. Ferdinand's language provides signifiers to give materiality to the infliction of pain and objectifies the body to make it into something that could be ripped, torn, and blasted.[152] The earth and tree imagery provide an accessible baseline from which an audience may begin to imagine the unthinkable.

The second driving metaphor in Ferdinand's speech is that of hell. While hell would certainly *not* be considered metaphorical in certain early modern contexts, I argue that Webster does indeed employ hell as metaphor to evoke a more vivid picture of Ferdinand's fantasies about bodily injury. Piero Camporesi notes in *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe*, "Over the course of the centuries hell has accurately recorded changes in society by modifying its own scenarios, and adjusting its own statutes. This adjustable space has put on changing performances…reestablished its fears, reinvented its demons, its fauna and [its] flora."[153] The imagery of fire, burning, stench, claustrophobia, entrapment, and forced cannibalism in Ferdinand's speech reflect

---

[151] Ibid., 213.

[152] This metaphorical rethinking of the body in pain mirrors Marcus's description of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*. See my chapter on *Titus Andronicus*.

[153] Piero Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 5.

both classical and early modern iconography of hell; his language again produces a template from which an audience may build imagery of Ferdinand's fantasy. As Alan Palmer suggests, narrative assembles tools necessary to put together a fictional world that may be believable to an audience; those tools include the real world (of the audience), the story world of the play, and the system of "triggers" within the narrative that projects an audience member from the real world into a fictional one.[154] Ferdinand's use of hell as a metaphor for his desire to hurt overlays horrific bodily destruction with familiar iconographic reference.

Critics and scholars have frequently debated the "reality" of hell for contemporaries of the early modern period as the concept transformed throughout the period, evidenced in *The Duchess of Malfi* in particular.[155] Webster's play arguably demonstrates a milestone in this emergent thinking about hell. Albert Tricomi suggests that the play "exhibits as compellingly as any other early modern text...the consequences of living in a world where the possibilities of spiritual intervention and demonic possession are continually at play."[156] Tricomi argues that modern criticism frequently assumes an early modern progression towards the secular that forecloses upon the very real potential for spiritual intervention in the minds of seventeenth century audiences. Tricomi's argument assumes that possession,

---

[154] Palmer, *Fictional Minds,* 12.

[155] Both Calvin and Luther suggest the metaphorical nature of Hell, yet there remains a Protestant reluctance, or perhaps a fear, of flat-out rejection of Hell as an actual location. As both Stephen Greenblatt and Eamon Duffy have suggested, the Reformation pressured concepts of the afterlife towards higher stakes by eliminating the intermediary position between heaven and hell (purgatory). D.P. Walker suggests in *The Decline of Hell* that the orthodoxy of Christian Redemption rests upon the premise of eternal damnation, and so the Reformation's destabilization of doctrine threatened to destabilize all the mysteries of Christianity (16).

[156] A.H. Tricomi, "Historicizing the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi.*" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 2004 34 (2): 346.

demonism, and evil become less terrifying as they transition from the "reality" of religious belief in hell towards a more secular, metaphorical construction of the same ideas. However, Ferdinand's appropriation of hell imagery not only draws upon iconography to shape his fantasies of inflicting pain, but his speech also suggests that the powers and potential for the human mind to create horror may outweigh the threat of a real place of hell.

Ferdinand's appropriation of hell imagery draws upon a binary early modern conception of hell. The sermons of John Donne, for example, articulate this fractured construction. Donne describes the "poena damni," or the "pain of loss," which is the torment of separation from everlasting joy and eternal bliss, and the "poena sensus," or "pain of sense," which represents the exquisite, unimaginable physical agony of hell.[157] While Donne reminds his audience that these two different types of torment compose the total horror of hellish punishment, his construction seems to typify an ambivalence between embodied, physical, and "real" hell, and an abstract, emotional, interior hellishness. Ferdinand invokes both the "pain of loss" and the "pain of sense" as he constructs an imagined hell to punish his sister and her lover for their sexual liaison. As the play's "devil," Ferdinand adopts the role of punisher for what he deems to be "sins." His fantasies about inflicting physical pain (as discussed above) specifically reflect his desire to replicate the "pain of sense" upon his sister and her lover.

[157] In "Renaissance and Modern Views on Hell," C.A. Patrides quotes early modern conceptions of hell thus: "the greatest punishment that the damned shall receiue in hell torments wil be the remembrance of their former pleasure" (James Forsyth, 1615—who is James Forsyth?). As John Donne says, "When all is done, the hell of hels, the torment of torments, is the everlasting absence of God... but to fall out of the hands of the living God, is a horror beyond our expression, beyond our imagination" (John Donne, 1632, as cited in Patrides, 225).

Although Ferdinand fantasizes about enacting the "pain of sense" upon the Duchess and Antonio, this fantasy also reflects his own entrapment in a self-created personal hell. He wishes to "quench my wild fire," and he imagines himself within the sulphur pit to enact his imagined punishments. Ferdinand's imagination engulfs him in what may be considered a "pain of loss." Ferdinand's frenzied vision of his sister "in the shameful act of sin" with "some strong-thighed bargeman, / Or one o' th' wood-yard that can quoit the sledge" (2.5.43-45) suggests a psychic torture of repetitive and repulsive fantasy. Ferdinand compulsively re-imagines the loss of his sister, either as an embodiment of purity, or arguably as an object of his own lust. As Ferdinand later reveals, the Duchess is his “twin” and in a sense, his simultaneous experience of creating and experiencing torment imaginatively twin his sister’s later experience to his own. Ferdinand’s imagination itself is a hell-place, in which he is both torturer and tortured.

While many early modern stage productions may, as Maus suggests, use partial presentations to fill in for undisplayable or undisplayed moments, Webster's play uses language and staging in place of spectacle not to make up for a performative shortcoming, but rather as a performative tool. The presentation and escalation of Ferdinand's fantasy expand the performative potential for horror. First, Ferdinand displays the potential for a mind to "conjure" horror; from mere suggestion, his mind somersaults toward increasingly vivid mental pictures, and finally toward (what to him is) a realistic rendering of his imagination's production. Imagining, then, can produce the effect of physical reality. If an audience member is able to "catch" Ferdinand's thoughts, his or her own potential to generate and proliferate images of horror may mirror the action of this character's maniacal mind. However, regardless of an audience's buy-in to this cognitive operation, Ferdinand's

fantasy demonstrates not only the generative potential of horror within the mind, but the process by which the mind may objectify and dehumanize the human body in order to instigate torture. For Ferdinand, as his sister's body becomes objectified and non-sentient, he is able to carry out his scheme of torture upon her. For an audience, the wild proliferation of Ferdinand's fantasy of bodily injury becomes, perhaps quite disturbingly, an almost filmic mode of entertainment.

While Ferdinand's language invokes imagery of bodily injury and hell, his fantasies play out with conspicuously staged un-reality. In contrast to the play's horrific verbal imagery, when the murder of the Duchess does occur, it is neat, quick, and bloodless. Her strangulation lacks climactic dramatic punch truly because she is so ready for her death; it seems almost merciful in light of the horrific emotional and psychological tortures that Ferdinand has inflicted upon her. However, the Duchess is nonetheless a victim, and she emphatically and repeatedly articulates her experience of pain to the audience. Just as Ferdinand's description of torture relies upon imagination, the Duchess's experience of pain does not manifest itself in overtly physical ways. The Duchess represents a very different kind of victim of pain than a character like Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*: her pain is an interiorized experience of an embodied mind.

The play continually contemplates the inner versus outer nature of the Duchess's body. Her brothers are obsessed with her purity and later with her surreptitious sexuality; Bosola uses apricots to "discover" her pregnancy, or "the young springal cutting a caper in her belly" (2.1.172-73); Antonio marvels at the inner and outer beauty of his wife, and wishes that other ladies would "dress themselves in her" (1.1.196). While other characters in the play may use their bodies as disguises to mask inner corruption, it seems that the

Duchess's body provides no such cover. Rather, just as Ferdinand convinces Bosola to penetrate her "private lodgings," the characters in the play continually act to ensure that the Duchess cannot keep anything privately hidden within her body or her mind.

While the male characters continually invest energy to know and contain the Duchess's private "self," the Duchess herself repeatedly reflects on her own body. In the first act of the play, she begs Antonio to view her as "flesh and blood" rather than as a "figure cut in alabaster" (1.2.386-387). The Duchess, in this case, wishes Antonio to forget his position of servitude to her and to take her as a lover. She later makes a similar argument to her brother, Ferdinand, as he reprimands her for taking a lover and ruining her reputation. She cries, "Why should only I, / Of all the other princes in the world, / Be cased up like a holy relic? I have youth, / And a little beauty" (3.2.137-139). The Duchess not only draws attention to her position of enclosure and physical containment by the men in her life, but she also seeks recognition for her experience as a fleshly, feeling human body. This articulation of her experience as a *body*, it seems, serves dual performative purposes. First, the Duchess's pleas remind Antonio and her brothers, as well as the audience, that the body is not just a sign of abstract purity or sin, but rather a dynamically feeling being. Further, the Duchess reminds the audience of the essentially displaced nature of witnessing the subjective experience of the other; in a sense, every act of witnessing another body, whether it is staged or "real," challenges the viewer to understand the physical reality of another subject. The Duchess's reminders that she is neither statue nor “relic” serve to refocus both her observers within the play and real audience to imagine the reality of her physical experience.

Although the Duchess calls attention to her body, and although Ferdinand's fantasies of punishment focus so pointedly on the destruction of her physical form, he directs his plan of torture towards her mind. Interestingly, the Duchess seemingly predicts her experience of pain when she first realizes her brothers' plot to punish her. In the third act, when Bosola lures Antonio to a meeting with her brothers, the Duchess suspects foul play and plans to send her husband to Milan. As she contemplates the best course of action, she says, "I know not which is best, / To see you dead, or part with you" (65-66). Here, the Duchess compares the horror of physical reality paired with certain knowledge to the detached, unseen fears that result from separation from a tangible, see-able, touch-able body. The productions of the imagination when separated from the physical evidence of a body, she predicts, may be worse than actual, physical horror of this evidence. In accordance with this prediction, the Duchess's experience of torture and pain are totally constructed within figments of the imagination, belief in illusion, and anxiety of the unknown.

As Antonio escapes and Bosola enters with a guard to take the Duchess prisoner, her perspective shifts to accept the role of a victim. Bosola announces, "you must see your husband no more" (3.5.99), and removes her to her palace for safekeeping. In this moment, the Duchess realizes Bosola to be a "devil," and compares him to "Charon," who will bring her "o'er the dismal lake" from which she will not return. The Duchess aligns her palace, which will serve as her "prison," with the mythological place of hell; Bosola transforms from trusted servant to both the ferryman and keeper of her hellish prison. These transformations mark the shift in the Duchess's vantage point; the physical reality of her world has not changed, but her perception of it has. Just as the letter suddenly transformed Ferdinand's perception of his sister into a subject of diabolical torture, the Duchess perceives

herself to be a subject of such torture when she is separated from her family and imprisoned in her home.

The scene that follows demonstrates the power of the imagination to create pain, but it also suggests the potential of art and representation, specifically drama, to illustrate horror and pain for an audience. Ferdinand enters the Duchess's quarters in darkness, gives her a dead man's hand to kiss, and then proceeds to display a phantasmagoric scene of her children and husband, fashioned out of wax so as to appear dead. While the dead man's hand first appears to be a living, human hand, the Duchess realizes that she has been tricked; a seemingly innocuous body part has become an object of horror. The wax figures mirror this representational effect: while the bodies appear to be horrific physical objects, the audience soon learns that they are, in fact, fake. Ferdinand's torture adopts a theatrical flair that reflects, quite self-consciously, upon the power of representational objects to alter an individual's perception. With effective presentation, both real and counterfeit objects can elicit horror and can also invoke cognitive, and thereby physical experience within the beholder.

When Ferdinand displays the artificial figures of Antonio and his children to the Duchess, it is unclear whether the audience at a performance of the play would believe that the figures are real within the storyworld. A reading audience clearly knows Ferdinand's trick: the stage direction indicates, "*Here is discovered, behind a traverse, the artificial figures of Antonio and his children, appearing as if they were dead*." However, it seems that a viewing audience would be in a position of uncertainty, perhaps both suspicious of Ferdinand's plot and fearful of its possible authenticity. The Duchess, however, experiences this horrific "art" as the real thing, and describes the trauma of the spectacle as physical

experience. The spectacle of her dead family is a representation of her worst fear and greatest loss, and believing it to be true, she experiences the representation as real pain and loss. She says, "There is not between heaven and earth one wish / I stay for after this. It wastes me more / Than were't my picture, fashioned out of wax, / Stuck with a magical needle and then buried / In some foul dunghill; and yon's an excellent property / For a tyrant, which I would account mercy" (61-66). The Duchess suggests that seeing her dead family is more painful, and "wastes" her more than would the experience of physical torture to her own body. While her allusion to a "wax" body may invite speculation as to whether the Duchess suspects the illusion of her family's bodies to be mere representations, the effect of such representation is nonetheless dramatic, physical, and real for her. Physical pain and ultimate death, or relinquishing her body as "property" to a cruel torturer, she suggests, would be a merciful alternative to her psychological experience of abstract and detached loss.

The Duchess goes on to beg for death, but also for the real stimulation and sensation of physical pain. She wishes to "freeze" or "starve" to death as alternatives to her grief. When Ferdinand tells her that she "must live," she despairs: "That's the greatest torture souls feel in hell— / In hell: that they must live and cannot die. / Portia, I'll new-kindle thy coals again, / And revive the rare and almost dead example / Of a loving wife" (4.1.69-70). Again, she articulates her desire for a concrete, physical experience akin to Portia's when she swallowed hot coals to commit suicide. The Duchess imagines her life as a "hell" in which she has no control and can see no end-point; this imagined hell-place is abstract and therefore a contrast to a formal physical experience. The "greatest torture," she suggests, is not necessarily physical pain, but rather the experience of living and not maintaining any

control over the future. The Duchess goes on to further describe her experience of agony in physical terms. In response to Bosola's encouragement to "leave this vain sorrow," she responds, "Good comfortable fellow / Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel / To have all his bones new set; entreat him live / To be executed again. Who must dispatch me? / I account this world a tedious theater, / For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will" (4.1.80-85). Again, the Duchess conceives of grief in physical terms, this time comparing her hopelessness to the breaking of a human body on a Catherine wheel. Finally, she scoffs at Bosola's pity, and tells him, "Thou art a fool then, / To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched / As cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers. / Puff! let me blow these vipers from me" (4.1.89-91). The Duchess's mental state has been pierced and deformed by the experience of witnessing her dead family; however, the "daggers" that she alludes to suggest that she also experiences sharp physical pain. She appropriates the language of physical pain in order to explain her experience of internal suffering.

Ferdinand takes great pleasure in his torture strategy; his plan to inflict pain without bodily violence has successfully drawn his sister toward despair. He gloats to Bosola, "Excellent; as I would wish; she's plagued in art. / These presentations are but framed in wax, / By the curious master in that quality, / Vincentio Lauriola, and she takes them. / For true substantial bodies" (4.1.111). As he reveals the Duchess's dead family to be artistically rendered wax figures, Ferdinand unveils his own "art" as his ability to carefully craft the illusion of reality; like the director of a play, he stages horror for dramatic effect. However, as the Duchess reveals, dramatic effect may be indistinguishable from real, physical and mental experience. Her belief in the reality of representation, perhaps, allows her to absorb counterfeit, wax figures as real loss. However, the audience may believe the same illusion

before Ferdinand's revelation, and may also experience the wax figures as the "real" dead bodies of Antonio and the children. Clearly the experiences of the audience and the Duchess differ in their perspectives on representation; the audience witnesses the representation of a representation of dead bodies, without initially knowing for certain that it is indeed artifice. However, the Duchess's pain, it seems, plays out the ultimate effect of art, and drama in particular: to illicit physical and mental response in an audience. This scene conflates torture with art and suggests the potential for torture to be structured entirely by representation.

Though Ferdinand delights in the success of his "art," his desire to inflict pain upon his sister remains unsatisfied; in response to Bosola's pleas to end the cruelty, Ferdinand says, "Damn her! That body of hers..." (4.1.121). Although he articulates his disgust toward her *body*, he again directs punishment toward her mind. His next plan, to overwhelm the Duchess with a throng of bawds and madmen, again directly targets her mental state. The madmen enter her chamber to illustrate once again the mind's corrosive potential. Their discourse becomes a reflection to the Duchess's own experience of pain: The Mad Astrologer asks, "Doomsday not come yet? I'll draw it nearer by / a perspective, or make a glass that shall set all the world on fire / upon an instant. I cannot sleep, my pillow is stuffed with a litter / of porcupines" (4.2.74-76), while the Mad Lawyer declares that "Hell is a mere glass-house, where the devils are continually blowing up women's souls, on hollow irons, and the / fire never goes out" (4.2.78-79). Both the Astrologer and the Lawyer articulate the experience of pain as a matter of perspective; what may seem from an objective standpoint to be an illusion (a pillow stuffed with porcupines, for instance), may be completely and physically real within subjective experience. Additionally, the image of hell as a glass-house further contributes to the problem of subjective experience in relation

to objective observation. The glass-house image suggests that the subjective experience of pain in hell is an enclosed and isolated (if oddly permeable) experience. While others may be able to witness the experience from the outside (as s/he within can gaze back) and to observe the details of hell with clarity and precision, as through glass, the subjective experience of pain is always at a remove from the witness. The madman's glass-house provides a metaphor for the structure of imagined pain in the play; the experience of pain may be witnessed and observed, but without physical evidence or subjective experience, its reality remains at a remove from the observer.

The Duchess's experience of pain is doubly invisible to her audience; her glass-house is the stage, which renders her fictional experience in objective terms, and her pain is characterized as internal, imagined, and mental rather than physical. However, the Duchess cannot believe that her subjective experience, so real and present to her, could not be obvious to the outside world. As the madmen torture her, she tells her servant, Cariola, "Necessity makes me suffer constantly, / And custom makes it easy. Who do I look like now?" (4.2.29-30). Cariola responds that she looks like her own portrait, a representation of her former self; while pain makes the Duchess believe that she must appear physically different, Cariola's observation suggests that she looks physically the same, although emptied of some kind of aura. Again, before the executioners enter to kill her, the Duchess converses with Bosola about her outward appearance. She wonders, "Dost thou perceive me sick?" to which Bosola responds, "Yes, and the more dangerously, since thy sickness is insensible" (4.2.114-115). The Duchess and Bosola's interaction reiterates several important formulations of pain. First, the problem of pain is often not *fully* perceptible to others; especially without a clear physical referent, as in the Duchess's experience, observers may

be unable to stand witness to pain. Further, as in the case of the Duchess's cognitive and emotional distress, the imagination's ability to conceive and expand pain may be more "dangerous" than a body's physical signifiers of pain.

In fact, the body according to Bosola is always an unreliable, weak, illusory surface; the dangers of internal, imperceptible sickness far outweigh the ailments that constantly plague the body. Bosola asks the Duchess in the moments before her death, "What's this flesh? A little curded milk, fantastical puff-paste; our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in; more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earth-worms" (4.2.120-123). Ultimately, Bosola again redirects the perspective of the audience to imagine the body not as the primary signifier, but as a malleable, vulnerable, unstable wisp. Bosola revalues interiority, that which is imperceptible, and beckons an audience to revalue its system of representation; physical, external representations become far less "real" than the specter of the mind, imagination, and internal pain.

In these scenes of torture, the Duchess conflates the mental disturbance of grief with physical pain. In one sense, physical experience provides metaphors through which to understand the intangible, abstract experience of grief and mental torment: perhaps the only way to describe her mind's state is through the concrete imagery of Portia's suicide, the Catherine wheel, and a body penetrated by daggers. As a dramatic strategy, the language of the Duchess provides the starting point for the audience's imaginations to produce, reproduce, and expand upon her experience of pain. Just as Ferdinand's language during his earlier tirade traces the progression of the increasingly horrific imagined pain of others, the Duchess's language traces an increasingly horrific experience of imagining one's own pain. Further, without the concrete visual representation of the Duchess's pain, the work of

imagining, cultivating, and expanding pain imagery rests in the minds of the audience. Finally, the Duchess and Bosola's language develops the play's conception of the relationship between physical and mental experience. The body's experience is not only influenced by, but integrally conjoined with the mind's perception of the world; just as importantly, the mind's experience is inextricably linked to and characterized by physical experience.

The actual murder of the Duchess, when it finally comes at the end of 4.2, is a welcome respite for the tortured woman. She says, "Come, violent death" (4.2.212), suggesting that her internal experience is far greater pain than impending strangulation or fear of the afterlife. Her death, a self-declared "mercy," drives Bosola's guilt and inspires Ferdinand's ultimate lycanthropy. The physical fact of her death spawns the internal deterioration of her torturers. In particular, in a bizarre series of events, Ferdinand reveals that he and the Duchess are twins and immediately commences his imagined journey into his existence as a werewolf. The revelation to Bosola that "She and I were twins" potentially offers very rich information.[158] Indeed the twinning of Ferdinand and the Duchess occurs throughout the play. But she serves as a mirror opposite to her deranged brother: the

[158] The "twinning" of Ferdinand and the Duchess is often mentioned in criticism. For instance, Roberta Barker gives an overview of the criticism in *Early Modern Tragedy, Gender and Performance, 1984-2000: The Destined Livery* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 55-82. Barker points out the ambiguity in the concept of "twin": is the Duchess a mirror image of her brother, or an exact opposite? Ultimately, she argues that the problem of twinning in *The Duchess of Malfi* introduces "male and female identities caught in a process of negotiation that made them one another's doubles within a discursive system that victimized them all" (57). Ken Jackson also devotes a chapter of his book, *Separate Theaters: Bethlem ("Bedlam") Hospital and the Shakespearean Stage* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), to the issue of twinning in the play. He suggests that the phenomenon of twinning is important to the interplay between madness and sanity in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Of course, the madmen's show becomes a reflection of Ferdinand's madness, but also a possible mirror to the Duchess's own mental state.

Duchess's sweet discourse finds its opposite in Ferdinand's violent, pain-centered language; Ferdinand's imaginings of inflicting pain are reflected in the Duchess's imagined experience of pain; the Duchess's internal suffering without physical referent provides the reverse of Ferdinand's eventual state of lycanthropy.

Despite a dizzying multitude of dead bodies onstage by the end of the play, the true pain rests not in this physical evidence but in illusory and abstract productions of horror. The Duchess, the Cardinal, and Ferdinand all articulate the idea that the imagination and the fear of an uncertain future are far worse than what is "real." As mentioned above, when the Duchess parts from her family and enters her personal hell, she wonders "I know not which is best, / To see you dead, or part with you" (3.5.63-65). The "realness" of a dead body, she suggests, is less torturous than the possibilities of an imagination run wild. The Cardinal similarly ponders the unknown as he reads an unidentified text: "I am puzzled in a question about hell: / He [the book's unknown author] says, in hell there's one material fire, / And yet it shall not burn all men alike. / Lay him by. How tedious is a guilty conscience! / When I look into the fishponds, in my garden, / Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake / That seems to strike at me" (5.5.1-4). The Cardinal, guilty from his involvement in the torture and death of his sister, suggests the limitless possibilities of how individual sins may result in individual punishments. Further, the productions of his "guilty conscience" actually conjure the vivid illusion of a creature bent upon retribution in his fishpond, a monster of his imagination to take the place of his own reflection. Finally, Ferdinand, in the instant before his death, dismisses the physical pain of the moment in his fear of what is to come: "The pain's nothing: pain many times is taken / away with the apprehension of greater, as the toothache with the sight of a / barber that comes to pull it out" (5.5.57-59). In his final

moments of life, Ferdinand's physical pain becomes ancillary to the imagination's "apprehension" of what could be worse. The play ultimately suggests that the fear of an imagined and abstract unknown is far worse torture than the "real" circumstances of torture itself.

Ultimately, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* narrows its focus on the interior experience of pain, yet does not stage tortured, bleeding bodies to evoke this experience. As Andrea Henderson suggests, this play gestures towards an emerging reading culture. Whether the play was intended for a theatrical or a reading audience, or both, Webster experiments with an innovative narrative strategy in this drama by displacing horrific spectacle into first and third person narrative, and by converting horror into self-consciously representational illusions. Far from a watered-down representation of torture, however, the play metatheatrically insinuates that imaginary, abstract, or illusory horror may be more powerful than the literal staging of such scenes.

The play also rethinks the role of the human mind in the construction of evil and pain. The repeated movement of both dialogue and action towards interior spaces, and ultimately towards the interior of human beings, positions the *inside* as the site of poison and horror. Although language of demons, possession, and hellishness pepper the dialogue, the play indicates that the source of evil resides inside the human. Ferdinand is terrifying because of his artistry for torture, his ability to conjure and carry out plans to create suffering. In a symmetrical fashion, the Duchess's experience of pain, which is founded upon dialogue and displaced from physical spectacle, suggests that profound pain may not afflict the body, but rather the interior realm, the mind. As an audience, our ability to understand the fictional experience of the Duchess relies upon our capacity to imagine it. As

evidenced, for instance, by Ferdinand's ability to conjure an image of his sister, or by the Duchess's experience of pain in response to the wax representations of her family, performance has the ability to evoke vivid physical and mental experience.

Finally, the representation of pain in *The Duchess of Malfi* articulates a distinct relationship between the inside and the outside of the body. While the story of pain relies upon words about the body as signifiers, the signified is invisible to a viewing audience. Conversely, the mind's ability to imagine and believe pain determines a human's experience of it. The devaluation of the body as a significant site of feeling suggests a precursor to Cartesian dualism: interior experience rests within the "puff-paste" of the flesh and operates independently. However, the play actually proposes a far more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the workings of the interior and the exterior of the body. Within the interior spaces of human beings, the play conceives of the possibility for a *mind* that imagines, creates, and alters perception. Much as twenty-first century cognitive scientists have found, *The Duchess of Malfi* suggests that the mind's function is inextricably and undeniably linked to the experience of the body.

V. "Why dost thou laugh? it fits not with this hour": Laughing at Staged Pain

The plays that are the subjects of this study on staged pain fall generally under the category of "tragedy." Pain, according to classical conceptions of drama, is an essential element of this genre; as Aristotle suggests, an incident of tragic suffering "results from destructive or painful action such as death on the stage, scenes of very great pain, the infliction of wounds, and the like."[159] Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* are typically characterized as markers of an Elizabethan craze for revenge tragedy, while Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* modifies this tradition for the Jacobean stage. Although the Christian drama of the late medieval period is often considered to be generically separate from the commercial drama of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, Christ himself, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, may be considered a tragic figure: much like Lavinia in *Titus*, the figure of Christ in the York mystery plays is isolated, martyred, and victim to the cruel caprices of human decision-making. Like the early modern plays succeeding them, the York mystery plays presumably impressed upon an audience the experiences of profound loss and suffering. In turn, we may assume, audiences both past and present may respond to such productions with empathy, sadness, shock, or horror.

Modern critical treatment of such plays descends from an Aristotelian concept of tragedy. A "successful" performance of a tragedy, according to many literary and theater critics, arouses pity and fear in an audience. The tragic impact should strike an audience with recognition of human despair that is both realistic and serious. The imitation of real

[159] Aristotle's "Poetics," in Richter, *The Critical Tradition*, *Third Edition* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), 67.

pain in performance should inspire empathy as well as horror. Essentially, there is not a legitimate place for comedy or *laughter* in the torture of Christ, the mutilation of Lavinia, or the psychological breakdown of the Duchess of Malfi.

However, upon close examination of the texts and investigation of their applications in performance, the potential for comedy is real, present, and ubiquitous in moments of pain onstage. Both in the fabrics of the texts and in the stage histories of performance, plays that stage pain commonly inspire (and possibly even encourage) laughter. The Pinners' pageant, the York mystery play that follows the horrific torture of Christ in the Tilemakers' pageant, quite skillfully manipulates the audience to laugh even as soldiers struggle to nail Christ's limbs to the cross. Throughout the stage history of *The Duchess of Malfi*, actors and directors despair when their attempts at seriousness result in twittering by the audience; this effect may have contributed to the dearth in stagings of this play between the Restoration and the twentieth century. Twentieth-century directors of *Titus Andronicus* consistently describe the challenges of avoiding or circumventing unwanted laughter in productions of this, the most grisly, gruesome, painful, and violent of Shakespeare's plays. Laughter, it seems, is the irksome problem that lurks around both criticism of these plays in general, and the performance of pain in particular.

However, laughter is not always an audience's response to staged pain. In fact, empathetic, physiological responses to pain during performance may have quite the opposite effect. For instance, while some productions of *Titus* inspire giggles, others have required ambulances to remain parked outside the theater because droves of audience members fainted during performances. So, while some performances succeed in eliciting horror and dismay, others cause laughter. Why do performances of pain elicit such divergent audience

responses? What are the elements of performance that may contribute to either tragic or comic effect? And perhaps most importantly, *is it a problem*, or is it inappropriate, for comedy to infiltrate the somber firewall of the representation of pain onstage?

In order to address the questions above, I will engage both textual analysis and an investigation of performance records specifically of the Passion Plays and of *Titus Adronicus* as exemplary. Textual analysis unearths a host of potential problematics: Quarto and Folio printings of a play may differ, so that it is not possible to determine a "definitive" text of a play; texts are malleable sources of information that are subject to infinite adjustments or modifications when enacted in performance. Further, when there is more than one version of a play, moments of pain may differ between them. For instance, Ravenscroft completely revised and rewrote sections of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, thereby producing an entirely different set of performative possibilities. Nonetheless, as a point of entry to moments of pain onstage, the texts provide something of a common ground for hundreds of years of performances of a play. It is worth considering whether humor may in fact exist as a possibility within the fabric of tragic texts. While various moments within tragic plays may be "read" as comic, reading in such a way places the critic in a precarious position of assuming authorial intention. However, at certain moments of these tragic and painful plays, humor actually arises as a plot device. What function does this humor play? Further, analysis of the texts makes it possible to chart sections of a play that are commonly cut or altered for performance; through investigation of such cuts and changes, patterns emerge to reveal "problem" areas in a play.

In addition to an exploration of the texts, I will consider records of performance across time and place. These records include responses and reports from actors, directors,

audience members, and critics of performances, all of whom will serve as witnesses to staged pain. From these records of performance, I seek patterns in the performance history of staged pain. How is pain represented onstage and how are moments of pain modified or interpreted for staging? To what effect? Which performances of pain are successful, and which are not? What is changed or avoided in performance and why? It seems that directors often find that the easiest and best way to avoid undesirable audience responses is to truncate or eliminate "problem" areas in the text altogether; when does this happen?

John Russell Brown problematizes the critical practice of approaching drama, particularly Shakespeare, as "performance." When critics talk about performance, he suggests, they approach each performance from a subjective point of view, and therefore each critic will notice what he or she is looking for or interested in. He also critiques critics for zoning in on certain snapshots without considering the movement, time, audience, peripheral actors or actions, or "journey" of the performance.[160] He warns that any critic's subjectivity and selectivity will necessarily limit a discussion of performance; with critical tunnel vision, we focus on the elements of theatrical experience that interest us, and

---

[160] John Russell Brown, "Writing About Shakespeare's Plays in Performance," in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. Grace Ioppolo. (Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2000), 151-163. According to Brown, some things to watch out for in studying performance: 1. "A performance provides a progressive experience for both actors and audiences. The passage of time should be involved in any description of a theatrical event..." (161). 2. The performance is a journey, during which actors as people in a drama pass through stages, places, and ideas. This must be considered as well (161). 3. The conditions of staging, with particular attention to the relationship between audience and actor, should be considered. Brown says that ideally the critic should see a show in which the actors and audience members are able to interact, as in Shakespeare's time. This seems a bit limited and narrow to me, but again, worth considering (161). 4. The critic must pay attention to the audience: "A performance has not been fully described if its audience has not been given careful attention" (162). 5. Finally, descriptions about a performance should be as specific as possible, including date and place. Every performance, even if given by the same actors in the same place, is different, and the critic should be sensitive to that (162).

therefore ignore the vast range of components and interactions that comprise a performance (staging, audience, lighting, time of day, physical plant of the theater, peripheral characters and their actions, etc.) A critic could never, according to Brown, acknowledge the full scope of theatrical experience.

Peggy Phelan further confounds a critic's task. According to Phelan, theater is "traceless," and cannot be "saved, recorded, documented," or reproduced. Phelan asserts that phenomenologically, "performance's being...becomes itself through disappearance."[161] In other words, theater is a temporal, physical, spatial and emotional experience that happens in the *present*; to describe or critique performance is therefore to supplement the unmediated experience itself.

Admittedly, Brown and Phelan unearth just the beginning of the potential problematics in the practice of discussing drama as performance, or of "doing" a performance history. To construct a history of performance of any given play from the early modern period until the present day is a deep and daunting project. Scant primary source evidence of early modern performances makes a timeline of any play's stage life sporadic at best, while the task of tracking and documenting each rendition, adaptation, professional and amateur staging could become an endless research-rabbit hole. Quite in opposition to Brown's warning of critical tunnel vision, this logic acknowledges that too broad a perspective may in fact endanger critical precision. With these critiques in mind, I attempt to construct a micro-history of moments of staged pain with a focus on traces left behind from performances of pain. These “traces” include the written and spoken responses of critics, actors, and audience members.

---

[161] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (*London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 146.

The performance of pain onstage consistently provokes strong audience response. In theater reviews of *Titus Andronicus*, for example, the audience response to Lavinia's rape and mutilation rarely goes without mention. In the midst of a virtual bloodbath of other horrors, the representation of Lavinia's pain provides a marker by which the success of a performance may be measured. Pain is a particularly tricky and disturbing theatrical problem. Pain, whether it is "real" or representational, is always invisible to an audience; outward referents or signifiers may point to the inner state of the body in pain, but cannot truly access the signified, which is "subterranean" according to Scarry, subjective, and unseeable.[162] For instance, a runner who grabs her side in the midst of a race indicates that she experiences a painful cramp. A witness to this action will likely interpret her gesture to mean that she feels pain in the place where she has put her hand. However, the pain itself remains hidden and uninterpretable from the outside. The symptom, or "sign" of the runner's pain is merely supplementary to the inaccessible, unmediated internal experience. Further, this outward sign (the gesture of grabbing her side) may operate independently of internal experience. Perhaps the runner lags behind her opponents and would like to give the audience a reason for why she is not winning the race; in other words, the runner may perform pain. The point is that there is no way for a witness to know whether the runner's pain is real or fake: phenomenologically, the difference between the performance of real pain and the performance of staged pain may be imperceptible.

Therefore, pain is always represented by means of its performance. In an analogous discussion, in her essay on fires in the theater, Ellen MacKay argues that fire is problematic because it disturbs "categorical boundaries that divide truth from fiction and actor from

[162] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 3.

audience."[163] Fires have created devastating loss of life in theaters across the centuries because audiences cannot, or do not, make the distinction between fire that is part of the performance and fire that is "real" and life-threatening. Like fire, I argue, pain can, undetected, shift the boundary between fiction and reality. Because the phenomenology of bodily pain and its representation elide a clear distinction between reality and falsehood, the spectatorial response to real and staged pain is similarly conflated.

This conflated spectatorial experience is in fact guided by brain function. As critics such as Bruce McConachie, Elizabeth Hart, Mary Crane, and Arthur Glenberg emphasize, the brain's mirror neurons dictate a spectator's experience of theater. As I discussed in the previous chapter, theater's incorporation of visual stimulation (gesture, movement) and language actually engage the brains of an audience to simulate actions, or to "catch" the actions of a fictional character's mind. Regardless of whether a situation is imagined or fictitious, audience members can "catch" emotion and physical experience and may "simulate the experiences of actor/characters in their own minds."[164] Witnessing staged pain and witnessing the real pain of a person in agony, therefore, involve analogous cognitive functions.

Many critics have drawn parallels between the practice of staging violent spectacle onstage and that of staging "real" violent spectacle on the scaffolds of early modern England.[165] Steven Mullaney, for instance, likens the stage to the scaffold in that both were

---

[163] Ellen MacKay, "The Theatre as a Self-Consuming Art." *Theatre Survey* 49:1 (May 2008): 97.

[164] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Elizabethan England* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1988), 66.

[165] In her article, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA*, No. 2. (March, 1990): 209-222, Karen Cunningham discusses violent spectacle and bodily torture on Marlowe's stage in relation to the actual public punishments that were

literally and figuratively marginal early modern spaces: both were places of execution and both maintained a position of ambivalence in early modern politics and culture. The theaters were located in the Liberties, on the outskirts of London as well.[166] However, Mullaney draws a distinction between witnessing the scaffold and the stage in that the scaffold involves genuine belief in the event before the audience, while "in contrast, we eavesdrop on a play; we are never the intended audience but always in the position of a conspirator and accomplice to an action...Theater relies not on belief but on a suspension of disbelief, an initial complicity and participation in the fiction before us that necessarily blurs or elides the boundary between the observing subject and hte dramatic subject, the action and the artificial person, the real and the imaginary."[167] At some levels, an audience member will differentiate between the performance of pain and the real experience of pain that he may witness at a public execution. However, in light of the most recent insights into the cognitive process of spectatorship, the distinctions between the experience of witnessing pain onstage and on a scaffold may not actually be clear-cut. To witness the pain of others is, in both cases, a mode of entertainment. Likewise, to witness the pain of others in either case may

---

enacted by the Tudor monarchy. She argues that Marlowe exploits the public staging of violence by the crown to expose the practice as a power-maintaining fraud. Similarly, Christopher Wessman, in "'I'll Play Diana': Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the 'Actaeon Complex'" (*English Studies,* 2001), argues that the phenomena of visual observation and sexualized voyeurism in the play are a reflection of/commentary on Elizabethan espionage. Both Cunningham and Wessman approach the violent themes in Marlovian drama from a Foucaultian angle: both analyze representations of violence onstage in relation to monarchical displays of power.

[166] Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 22.

[167] Ibid., 112.

produce unmediated and unpredictable physiological response; in particular, the "traces" of staged pain trigger responses from laughter to fainting.

The English mystery plays provide a rich and fruitful foundation from which to understand pain on the commercial stage of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. As I have argued, the York pageants provide examples of the ways in which subjective experience, and the interior experience of pain in particular, is played out, or rehearsed, decades before many critics claim the emergence of "subjectivity" onstage. The scourging of Christ in the Tilemakers' play, for instance, establishes a model of how pain may be staged, but also develops a complex dynamic between an audience and actors that implicates each member of the theatrical experience in the silent witnessing of an other's pain. These models construct a framework for the dynamics of staging and witnessing pain on the early modern stage. Similarly, the Corpus Christi plays (in this case, I will again focus on York) introduce the complex, and perhaps surprising relationship between comedy and horror onstage; the Pinners' play in particular draws out the potentially uncomfortable proximity between moments of pain and the laughter of an audience. This proximity, which reveals a tenuous boundary between comedy and horror, sets a precedent for similarly incongruous moments onstage in the decades that follow and into the Jacobean period.

The English Corpus Christi pageants were dynamic, multisensory performances that functioned as social and ritual events in medieval communities. They served both as didactic templates to confer biblical and liturgical knowledge upon the audience and as dynamic exchange between performers, between audience members, and between performers and the audience. The central symbol of these pageants, and the namesake of the festival itself, the "body of Christ," comprised a large part of the pageants' focus. At York, as we have seen,

nine of the plays were devoted to the Passion sequence, which details the systematic capture, mocking, torture, and murder of Christ at the hands of ruthless soldiers and bureaucrats. The language and action of the Passion sequence inspire reflection upon the pain and suffering of Christ; his torture in the Tilemakers' pageant, for instance, highlights the cruelty of human decision-making and implicates the audience as culpable witnesses to Christ's pain. The subject matter of these pageants, it may be inferred, is both sober and sobering.

However, while the Tilemakers' pageant details the scourging of Christ in exacting detail, this play is followed in the York cycle by the Pinners' pageant, a play that arguably introduces *humor* into this most sacred and brutal of stories. In this pageant, four soldiers bicker and bumble as they work to complete their task: nailing Christ to the cross. The center of the action in this play is the work of these soldiers; they dictate the physical challenges of effectively nailing a human frame to a wooden crucifix, while the figure of Jesus remains mostly silent throughout. As Richard Beadle and Pamela M. York suggest in their introduction to the pageant, since the actor who plays Christ is flat on the stage (on top of the cross) for most of the pageant, the focus of the audience is on the soldiers, "who are not shown to be aware of their victim in any subjective sense. Hence, although they describe for the audience every gruesome detail of what they are doing, it is in detached terms, as a job executed by craftsmen forced to work under difficult conditions."[168]

As Beadle and King indicate, the soldiers in this play continually and repeatedly objectify the body of Christ as they struggle to do their work of nailing him to the cross. For instance, as they stretch and pull his limbs to attach each to a part of the crucifix, they are

---

[168] Richard Beadle and Pamela King ed., *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 211.

confounded that the body and the piece of wood do not seem to fit together correctly. As Soldier 2 attempts to attach one of Christ's arms, he says, "I hope I hold this hand, / And to the bore I have it brought / Full buxomly without band [I hope that I can attach this hand to the correct hole without using a rope]" (98-100). The soldier's use of the words "this hand" seemingly detaches the appendage from the rest of Christ's body, and isolates the problem of binding that body part from the problem of pain in the body as a whole. As the scene continues, the soldiers fret about which "stub" [short nail], "cord," and "rope" will most effectively accomplish the work of binding one object to another. Their attention to tools and practical methods of accomplishing a task overshadow direct attention to the pain that Christ may experience as a result of such "work." Presumably an audience's focus is also directed at the work of the soldiers, and the soldiers' banter distracts from the problem of Christ's body in pain onstage. Therefore, by way of both objectification and distraction, the possibility of humor emerges in the midst of a representation of pain. An audience's attention is not directed at the horrific implications of the spectacle before them, and may therefore more likely accept the possibility of laughter in the midst of horror.

It seems that the humor in this pageant derives from the soldiers' own blundering incompetence and from physical, almost slap-stick performativity. They are continually baffled as to how to solve the problem of nailing a body to a cross in which the holes have been bored in the wrong places. The four soldiers alternately exclaim in frustration: "In faith, it was over-scantily scored, / That makes it foully for to fail" (111-112); "Go we all four then to his feet, / So shall our space be speedily spend" (122-123); "Oh, this work is all unmeet- / This boring must all be amend" (127-128). These aggravated outcries lend themselves readily to physical comedy, as the soldiers continually try to lash the body to the

cross, move around to work as a team, unsuccessfully nail the "sinews" to the wood, and curse the inaccurate borings on the cross.

In the midst of these absurd frustrations, the soldiers acknowledge the pain of Christ only to actively discredit it. Soldier 2 indicates in line 110 that "he bide in bitter bale" [he suffers in extreme pain] as a result of the stretching and pulling the soldiers must do to correctly attach the body to the cross. However, in response, Soldier 1 wonders, "Why carp you so?"; in other words, Soldier 1 scolds his colleague for bothering with irrelevant information, namely, the pain of Christ. As the soldiers finally succeed in lashing him to the cross, Soldier 1 announces that "These cords have evil increased his pains, / Ere he were to the borings brought" (145-146). In response to this reflection of pain, Soldier 2 observes that "asunder are both sinews and veins / On ilka side, so have we sought" (147-148). Rather than acknowledge the pain of Christ, as noted by Soldier 1, Soldier 2 deflects empathy with a seemingly detached observation about the body.

As the soldiers struggle on, they belabor their efforts to hoist the cross into the air and to safely fasten it to the mortise. In this debacle, the soldiers' language actually draws attention to their *own* pain. Soldier 1 hurts his shoulder; Soldier 2 bemoans his exhaustion; Soldier 3 complains of a back injury; and Soldier 4 reprimands their incompetence: "Lay down again and leave your din, / This deed for us will never be done" (195-196). As they lift, heave, fail, and try again, it seems as if their deed will indeed "never be done"–the challenges to their success continue as they discover the need to drive wedges into the mortise to prevent the cross from tipping over. In all, their work is not characterized as that of somber cruelty, but rather as a process of witless folly.

Beadle and King identify the eventual moment of "success" in the Pinners' pageant, the moment when the cross is lifted to reveal the crucified body of Christ, as a transformational moment in the performance. Further, as Beadle and York indicate, and I will further illustrate below, the dialogue actually encourages the audience to laugh during this scene; however, as the soldiers lift the cross to a vertical, standing position and drop it into the mortise, "the full force of the soldiers' workmanship becomes apparent, and the audience realizes that in their laughter at the awkward efforts of four local workmen, they have been seduced into condoning the Crucifixion."[169] What could be funny about this play? Why is laughter a part of the Crucifixion? What effect, other than "condoning the Crucifixion," does the possibility of laughter have in a representation of staged pain such as the nailing and raising of Christ onto the cross? They suggest in their introduction to the pageant that at this moment the members of the audience recognize their roles as accomplices to the pain of Christ. However, the moment when the cross is lifted is not necessarily a "threshold" moment; the soldiers' banter continues as they lift the cross and drive wedges into the mortise. The text does not reveal a particular moment of revelation; rather, the humorous element of the soldiers' struggle continues even when it would be visibly obvious to an audience that the banter was actually implicated in a vicious project. Once the cross has been raised, the soldiers continue to bicker as they drive wedges into the mortise; Christ speaks movingly to the audience to "behold mine head, mine hands, and my feet," and the soldiers then continue their banter for an additional 35 lines. Thus, the pageant's movement does not stop at any particular moment of realization; the representation of pain and the potential for humor coexist from beginning to end. Why is laughter a part of

[169] Beadle and King, *York Mystery Plays*, 211-212.

the Crucifixion? What effect, other than "condoning the Crucifixion," does the possibility of laughter have in a representation of staged pain such as the nailing and raising of Christ onto the cross?

The Pinners' pageant is provocative in a number of significant ways. First, given the humor of the soldiers' physical comedy and bumbling dialogue, the pageant seamlessly interweaves comic elements with a story that is both sacred and horrific. Although a moment of realization was possible at a variety of moments within the frame of the pageant, the text does not reveal any precise point when comedy ends and empathy, horror, or pity begins. Part of the complexity of this pageant is the possibility that an audience member may not know or understand when to stop laughing. The potential for comedy to spill too far into the pain and death of Christ raises the stakes for an audience's realization of profound Christian guilt. Further, this pageant was a part of the York Passion sequence year after year; it was a part of a story that was familiar to generations of community members, as Peter Womack argues.[170] If everyone knows the outcome (audience members anticipate both the comic and the horrific elements of the pageant), then inappropriate laughter does not take an audience by surprise; instead, laughter becomes an annual element of ritual reflection on Christ's body.

But how can we know that laughter actually was a part of the mystery plays? Of the scant documentation of audience experience at the Corpus Christi plays, the Wycliffite treatise against miracle plays provides the most clear evidence of the ubiquity of laughter at

[170] Womack, in "Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century," 100.

these performances.[171] The "tretise of miraclis pleyinge" firmly denounces the practice of performing biblical scenes, and one major Lollard critique of such performances is the inappropriate amusement of audiences. The Wycliffite author asserts that "no man shulde usen / in bourde and pleye the myraclis and werkis that Crist so ernystfully / wroughte to oure helpe" (18-20). The "bourde and pleye," or the amusement and recreation of the audience in response to stories that should be approached with grave earnestness, is both disrespectful and sinful according to the Lollard text. The author goes on to denounce the problem of laughing at Christ. First, the author says, "And / therefore it is that syentis myche noten: that of Cristis lawyyng we redden / never in holy writt, but of his myche penaunse, teris and schedyng of blod, doying us to witen therby that alle oure doyng heere shulde ben in / penaunce, in disciplynyng of oure fleyssh and in penaunce of adversite" (50-54). In other words, the author argues that we never read about Christ laughing ("lawyyng") in scripture but only of his suffering, tears and bloodshed; therefore, we should not laugh but rather should meditate on the implications of his pain. Next, the author condemns the problem of the "myrthe of the body" in response to representations of Christ's story. This mirth, which may be interpreted as pleasure, laughter, or hilarity, is again a detrimental result of live performances. Finally, the Wycliffite text asserts, "sythen thes myraclis pleyeris taken in bourde the ernestful werkis of God, no doute that thei scornen God as diden the Jewis that bobiden Crist, for thei lowen at his passioun as these lowyn and iapen of the myraclis of God" (91-94). This passage quite directly confronts the "problem" of laughing at the Passion: the author states that the players make amusement out of God's earnest work and become like the Jews who mocked Christ. In fact, the Jews "lowen," or "laugh," at his

[171] I reference "Here bigynnes a tretise of miraclis pleyinge," in Anne Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1997), 97-104.

Passion just as they ridicule the miracles of God. The Passion becomes, from this perspective, a terrible, inappropriate joke when played onstage by actors who warp piety into a form of entertainment. Laughing at the Passion, on the part of either actors or audience members, is a fact and a problem according to this author; it is both an incongruous and an unacceptable response to Christianity's most sacred story.

Based on this testimony, and the texts themselves, laughter was a part of the Passion plays at York. The text of the Pinners' Pageant indicates the inclusion of slap-stick, physical comedy, while the Wycliffite text shows that the author perceived laughter to be a problem at the annual performance of the Passion. In the Pinners' play in particular, the element of comedy may have served to escalate the effect of the Christian story: an audience's laughter would later, on reflection, if not at the moment of laughing, make individuals feel more responsible or guilty for their participation in the Crucifixion story. This incorporation of laughter into the Corpus Christi plays, and in particular the use of comedy in the midst of the Passion pageants, sets a standard for the subsequent incongruous interaction between staged pain and laughter on the commercial stage of Elizabethan England.

Critics have long described Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* as the most gruesome and horrific of his tragedies; the sacrifice of Alarbus, the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, Titus's self-mutilation, the slaughter of Demetrius and Chiron, and the subsequent cannibal feast of Tamora, as well as the carnage at the end of the play, constitute a panoply of horrors. Pain, suffering, violence, and despair absorb every facet of the action. However, in looking at records of the stage history of this play, critics more often than not comment upon the problem of laughter in performance. In fact, it seems a stock compliment to a "successful" performance of *Titus* when a critic notes that a specific director or a

performance of the play *avoids* laughter during a production. I will first consider the possibility that comedy is actually a part of the play's constitution by looking at potentially comic elements of the text. Next, I will look at the practical application of this text in performance to investigate when and why laughter emerges during productions of *Titus*.

A reading audience does not often detect aspects of humor in *Titus Andronicus*. However, Andrew Leggatt makes a compelling argument about the incorporation of humor into *Titus* as text.[172] Using Aaron's final speech, Leggatt reads Aaron's defiance in the face of his heinous deeds and his eventual demise as laughter. He suggests that this final moment actually functions within the play as a self-reflexive recognition of the role of the absurd in tragedy. He suggests, "This cruel detachment is Aaron's standard attitude throughout the play, but it also reminds us how easily a tragic action can come to seem ludicrous if seen from a different angle of vision..."[173] He notes that performances of tragedy always skirt laughter, and *Titus* is particularly problematic in this sense. An essential part of production, Leggatt says, is figuring out how to "control the laughter, either by suppressing it or by finding moments to release it without doing damage."[174] While Leggatt recognizes that our accounts of the play from contemporaries do not really give us a clue about whether people laughed in Elizabethan England, he argues that the inclusion of Aaron's mockery "shows the possibility is there, and it may be that the play's creator, looking back at his own work... saw that possibility himself."[175] Leggatt's argument suggests that Shakespeare recognized the

---

[172] Andrew Leggatt, "Standing Back From Tragedy: Three Detachable Scenes," in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. Grace Ioppolo. (Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2000), 108-121.

[173] Ibid., 108.

[174] Ibid., 108.

[175] Ibid., 109.

potential for humor in tragedy and intentionally incorporated it as a sign of this recognition.[176]

The potential for humor may in fact emerge from other scenes in the play as well. Another instance of the possibility for comedy is in the bloody-pit scene, which occurs in 2.3, at the exact time when Demetrius and Chiron rape and torture Lavinia somewhere off-stage. When her rapists drag her away to perform the unseen act, Quintus and Martius come onstage to discover Bassianus's dead body, and they create a displaced image of the violence that happens simultaneously. Somewhere nearby, Demetrius and Chiron torture and violate Lavinia, while her brothers discover her husband in a bloody pit. The words of Martius and Quintus describe a "detested, dark, blood-drinking pit," an "unhallowed and bloodstained hole," "maiden blood" and "a swallowing womb" during the time when the rape is presumably occurring offstage. The imagery of this scene, when layered with the knowledge of Lavinia's simultaneous violation, produces potentially horrific imagery with language. However, the brothers' antics as they struggle to get out of the hole, and their wild and patently un-"manly" exclamations of horror in response to their debacle create a ridiculous scenario. Much like the soldiers' banter in the York Pinners' Pageant, the brothers' almost slap-stick routine about the pit, in addition to the dialogue and stage directions as they struggle within the hole, create the possibility for physical comedy.

While the bloody-pit scene may be read with humor, the potential for physical comedy truly emerges with a staging of this scene.[177] And indeed, the scenes that surround

[176] In "Standing Back From Tragedy," Leggatt also discusses the fly-swatting scene in *Titus*, which was added later to the Folio version of the play (he assumes by Shakespeare). This scene, he says, provides evidence that Shakespeare wanted to insert an element of the absurd into his otherwise serious tragedy.

the rape and mutilation of Lavinia are the most frequently noted by critics, actors, and directors of the play as problematic. In fact, Titus himself seems to condone, or at least acknowledge, the response of laughing at others' pain. Act 3, scene 1 introduces a seemingly endless display of horrors. After a long and respected military career, Titus faces the rejection of the tribunes of Rome; he learns that his son, Lucius, has been banished; Titus then encounters Lavinia, who has been raped and mutilated; he needlessly cuts off his own hand; and he is confronted with the heads of his two sons. As Titus stands handless, onstage with the tattered remains of his family and his pride, Marcus predicts the suitable response: "Ah, now no more will I control thy griefs: / Rend off thy silver hair, thy other hand / Gnawing with thy teeth; and be this dismal sight / The closing up of our most wretched eyes. / Now is the time to storm; why art thou still?" (3.1.259-263). However, instead of tearing out his hair or biting at his own skin, Titus responds to this over-abundance of horror thus: "Ha, ha, ha!" (3.1.264). He laughs.[178] Marcus stands amazed, wondering, "Why dost thou laugh? it fits not with this hour" (3.1.265); Titus's reaction, suggests Marcus, is unfitting, or inappropriate, to the occasion of pain.

What does Titus's response to overwhelming pain (his own and that of others) tell us about tragedy? In one sense, Titus's outburst provides an answer to his own ongoing query about human limitations. Throughout the scene, as horror upon horror emerges, Titus repeatedly questions the boundaries of his pain: he asks, "Is not my sorrow deep, having no bottom?" (3.1.216) and, "When will this fearful slumber have an end?" (3.1.252). Comparing his miseries to a natural deluge, he asks, "When heaven doth weep, doth not the

[178] According to his meticulous account of laughter and weeping on the Renaissance stage, Matthew Steggle asserts that "Ha, ha, ha" is "the commonest literal representation of laughter in early modern drama." Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Threatres* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 26.

earth o'erflow?" (3.1.221). Imagery of overflow gives way to sudden drought: in response to Marcus's question about his laughter, Titus says, "Why, I have not another tear to shed" (3.1.266).[179] The beleaguered patriarch has reached, he feels, the end of his emotional supply. His response indicates that there is, in fact, a limit to how much pain a person can witness with the "fitting" response. Further, once the fitting responses (hair tearing, skin gnawing, self-mutilation, crying) are exhausted, Titus suggests, laughter survives as an unexpected reaction to pain.

Of course, the audience of *Titus Andronicus* differs from Titus himself in terms of spectatorial perspective; while the audience witnesses pain at a remove (and arguably from a position of "suspended disbelief"), Titus is a participant in the tragedy. However, the audience shares with Titus a position as witness to Lavinia's silent pain. Titus's unfitting response of laughter models for the audience first that there *is* a limit, or a boundary, to how much horror and pain a person can witness; pity, sorrow, and fear are expendable emotional resources that may indeed get "used up." Further, Titus indicates, when all fitting response to tragedy has been exhausted, the apparently unfitting response, laughter, may result. While Marcus immediately designates laughter as an inappropriate response to tragedy, Titus

[179] This scene provides numerous implied stage directions to indicate weeping. Titus's references to being swallowed by "brinish bowels" (97), his "stained" cheeks that are "like meadows not ye dry" (124-25), and to "our bitter tears" (129) indicate that Titus weeps. His language also describes the tears of Marcus ("my brother, weeping at my woes" (100) and Lavinia ("fresh tears / Stood on her cheeks" (111-12). Additionally, both Lucius and Marcus beg Titus, "cease your tears" (136) and "dry thine eyes" (138). As Matthew Steggle suggests in *Laughing and Weeping*, "the exact mechanisms for the representation of tears on the Renaissance stage remains mysterious," but reference to crying or tears appears to be the primary signal that weeping occurs onstage (56). Therefore, Titus's laughter emerges directly after, or perhaps as a result of, his dried up tears. Early modern medical constructions of laughing and weeping actually observed the physiological similarity between the two: both laughing and crying produced facial distortion, tears, and respiratory symptoms (Steggle 14). Therefore, the transformation from Titus's tears to his laughter is a nuanced physical shift, which necessitates little stage direction to indicate change.

acknowledges and demonstrates the knee-jerk reaction to giggle when tragedy demands too much.

Perhaps Titus's dialogue provides a clue to the vulnerable balance between tragedy and hilarity in productions of this play. Indeed, the stage history of the play suggests that Titus is not the only one laughing during moments of staged pain and violence; *Titus* always teeters on the brink of parody, comedy, or farce. A review of *Titus* from the early modern period to the present reveals a pattern of emotional unbalance on the part of audiences: people laugh, cry, faint, recoil, and sometimes, gleefully shout with the thrill of violence onstage. Several plot details may seem ridiculous and beg for questioning: How could Lavinia lose so much blood and survive? Why does Marcus talk so long in 2.4 instead of administering first aid to his bleeding niece? How can a director stage Titus cutting his own hand, discovering his sons' heads, and viewing Lavinia's maimed body in one scene without seeming parodical? Directors of *Titus Andronicus* have struggled with these questions since the play's inception, it seems, and have often unsuccessfully attempted to temper an audience's inclination to laugh along with Titus.

There are no extant records of audience response to *Titus* from the early modern period. However, Ben Jonson ribs *Titus* (and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*) in his 1614 introduction to *Bartholomew Fair.* Jonson's remark, "He that will swear, *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays, yet shall pass unexcepted at, here, as a man whose judgment shows it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty, or thirty years" mocks the over-the-top style in these plays. Jonson's snide reference indicates the ubiquity of this style in early modern popular culture and, as critics have remarked, may suggest that the excesses

of revenge tragedy were already out of date by the time Jonson wrote *Bartholomew Fair*.[180] Indeed it seems that Jonson points to the humorousness associated with revenge tragedy, and with *Titus* in particular. However, perhaps his remark does not necessarily indicate that the excessive brutalities of *Titus* were now laughably out of date; perhaps, rather, his comment simply indicates that the brutalities of *Titus* were sometimes, and had always been, laughable.

Between the Jacobean period and 1923, *Titus Andronicus* appeared onstage only in adapted form; the common goal of these adaptations was to squelch the laughter commonly associated with the play. First, in the late seventeenth century, Edward Ravenscroft revived *Titus Andronicus* with a revised script aimed to reform the "heap of Rubbish" that he deemed Shakespeare's original. Ravenscroft's text was first acted in fall of 1678, revived in the mid-1680s, and published in 1687.[181] Ravenscroft cut or changed much of the script, and as Alan Dessen indicates, "most of these moments involve on-stage violence or images that can elicit unwanted audience laughter."[182] For instance, Ravenscroft pared down Marcus's 47 lines when he discovers the mutilated Lavinia. In Ravenscroft's adaptation, audiences witnessed the effects of violence, such as Lavinia's body and Titus's severed hand, but not the actual deed–Ravenscroft removed much of violent action from the stage. In his epilogue, Ravenscroft ends with a statement on the desired audience response to his play: "Let us be

---

[180] Alan Dessen, *Shakespeare and Performance: Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 5. Dessen suggests that Jonson's remark shows how passé the revenge tragedy genre had become by 1614. While the genre of revenge tragedy did indeed change in the twenty years between the mid-1590s and the time of Jonson's writing, revenge tragedy in the form of *The Duchess of Malfi*, for instance, was in fact still quite popular in 1614.

[181] Ibid., 7.

[182] Ibid., 7.

Mute 'till the whole Truth comes out, / Not like the Rabble at Executions, shout."[183] Ravenscroft beseeches his audience to respond "mutely" to the representation of pain onstage, not raucously, like the "rabble" who shout at the real pain of public executions. Laughter, joviality, and hilarity were quite unwelcome responses to this seventeenth-century version of *Titus*. Ravenscroft both purposefully framed his adaptation and carefully modified the action and dialogue of Shakespeare's play to reform his audience's response.

Other pre-twentieth-century productions included *Titus* in Philadelphia, 1839, which "excluded the horrors" of the play, and Ira Alderidge's version in 1850s America that eliminated the mutilation of Lavinia and recast Aaron as a heroic figure.[184] A 1923 performance at the Old Vic theater in London marked the beginning of a hesitant wave of twentieth-century interest in *Titus.* According to critics, this production was not generally considered a "success"; it was the first time that the play had been performed in its original form in centuries, and the audience was able to hold it together "very well until near the end when they refused to take [the horrors] seriously any longer."[185] The audience's laughter at the Old Vic left its mark on twentieth-century productions of the play: this production became a touchstone for failure in capturing the appropriate atmosphere of horror in *Titus*. According to Dessen, in response to the Old Vic performance, modern "directors have...gone to considerable lengths to avoid unwanted laughter."[186]

---

[183] Barbara A. Murray, *Shakespeare Adaptations from the Restoration: Five Plays* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005).

[184] Harold G. Metz, "Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 1977): 154-169.

[185] Dessen, *Shakespeare and Performance,* 13.

[186] Ibid., 112.

Despite the questionable legacy of the Old Vic performance, there were a number of "successful" twentieth-century productions of *Titus*. In 1955 Peter Brook capitalized on the atmosphere of post-World War II to reflect upon the "modern" emotions of "violence, hatred, cruelty, and pain."[187] Brook's production, which featured Lawrence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, is often noted as the model for subsequent performances. His approach was to stylize the horror; for instance, in performance Vivien Leigh used red streamers to represent Lavinia's bloody mouth and hands, and the musical accompaniment of a harp in 2.4 set the tone. Brook cut the script by 650 lines; there was "no visible gore" in the production, but apparently many audience members fainted; his production relied upon the powerful emotional impact of metaphor rather than literal representation. Brook, according to theater critics, kept an eagle eye out for possible comic moments and then cut those moments to avoid the "wrong" response from the audience. However, although Brook's production is often noted as the gold standard for twentieth-century performances, reviews from 1955 display a typical ambivalence about audience response. As Philip Hope-Wallace wrote on August 17, 1955, "Tonight's audience found the final heaped-up carnage and the episode of the illegitimate black child a little too much on the laughable side of horror. Yet, for the better part, they saw a tremendous Elizabethan box-office success given its true size and an explicable popularity."[188] As the title to Hope-Wallace's article "Elizabethan Carnage Nearly Credible" suggests, Brook succeeds in creating a "nearly credible" staging of *Titus Andronicus*.

---

[187] Ibid., 115.

[188] Philip Hope-Wallace, "Archive Theatre Review: Elizabethan Carnage Nearly Credible," (*The Guardian*, August 17, 1955). Web. Accessed 1 July 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/1955/aug/17/peter-brook-titus-andronicus

Regardless of ambivalent contemporary reviews, Brook's production set a precedent for subsequent productions of the play; twentieth-century directors commonly opted to stylize violence as a way to mediate the potential for hilarity. For instance, in 1967 Gerald Freedman directed a highly ritualistic and abstract performance, using red ribbon for Lavinia's blood and incorporating masks to represent death. Of his production, Freedman said:

> One must shock the imagination and subconscious with visual images... the gore and horror of this play more meaningful and emotional to a contemporary audience. The solution to a more immediate response seemed to lie in a poetic abstraction of the events existing in an emotional compression of time and space... I wanted the audience to accept the mutilations and decapitations and multiple deaths with belief instead of humor...The solution had to be in a poetic abstraction of time and in vivid impressionistic images rather than in naturalistic action and this led me to masks and music and ritual.[189]

Freedman's decision to stylize horror was a direct response to the potential for comedy, and his reflection speaks to the twentieth-century tradition of *Titus* onstage. Productions of the play most commonly cut lines, stylized the violence, or linked the play's horrors to modern atrocities such as the Holocaust or Vietnam.[190] With rare exception, productions of *Titus Andronicus* have gone to great lengths to substantially alter the text and/or to manipulate the

---

[189] In Metz's "Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*," (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Spring 1977):154-169.

[190] Ibid., 154-169. Like Freedman, Pat Patton's 1986 production stylized the horror (using red silk for blood, for instance), and self-consciously referred to Vietnam as a way to "modernize" horror. A few "realistic" (rather than stylized) versions of the play have also been noted as "successful" including Douglas Seale's 1967 production, which utilized a Nazi-era theme. This production received mixed reviews; Metz notes general laughter at certain moments, including when Titus appears wearing a chef's hat. Trevor Nunn's 1972 production focused on the "Elizabethan nightmare" of the end of the golden age, using England as analogy to the power of the United States. Nunn's production, which was inspired by Fellini's *Satyricon*, featured a Lavinia who realistically struggled to walk, crawled, and crouched like an animal in the scene of her discovery by Marcus.

representation of horror.[191] The primary reason for such directorial decisions has been to avoid the "problem" of laughter in the play.

Lucy Bailey's 2006 production of the *Titus* at London's Globe Theater offers a modern case-study in the intersections between horror and laughter. The play ran from May 20 through October 6 as part of the Globe's 2006 "The Edges of Rome" season, and starred Douglas Hodge as Titus and Laura Rees as Lavinia. Reviews of the production were generally positive; this version of *Titus* was overarchingly deemed a "successful" one, often in contrast to other, less critically acclaimed predecessors. Reviewers distinguished Bailey's production in particular for three unusual elements. First, William Dudley designed a black roof-like cover to the Globe, which was inspired by a valerium at Rome's Coliseum. The original design was a "cooling system which consisted of a canvas-covered, net-like structure made of ropes, with a hole in the centre."[192] Dudley's cover draped across two-thirds of the theater and created a "dark and funereal setting" for the play. Second, reviewers note that Bailey integrated the performers into the space of the audience, using wheeled towers to move actors through the crowds[193] and giving actors "license to roam amongst the

[191] Deborah Warner's 1987 production is the exception because, unlike most other modern performances, her production did not cut any lines but was hailed as a resounding success. Paul Taylor, "Titus Andronicus, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon," (*The Independent*, 29 Sept. 2003). Web. 1 July 2011; Mel Gussow, "Stage View: Englishwomen Make an Impact as Directors," (*The New York Times*, 7 Aug. 1988.) Web. 1 July 2011.

[192] "Shakespeare's Globe Goes Under Cover."

[193] Natalie Bennett, "Theater Review: *Titus Andronicus* at Shakespeare's Globe," (*BC Culture*). Web. 1 July 2011.

audience."[194] Finally, many critics noted the music by Django Bates to be a "genuinely haunting" addition to the staging.[195]

Some of the most prominent reviews of Bailey's *Titus* featured warnings about potentially disturbing and gruesome subject matter. According to the *New York Times*, a spokesman for the Globe warned of "a higher level of fainters this year than we would normally experience" during productions of *Titus Andronicus*.[196] Both reviews and non-critical articles reported that "first-aid assistants and ushers with wheelchairs" were kept on hand during performances to "help members of the audience" who were "overcome."[197] Not surprisingly, 2.4, the scene in which Lavinia appears after her rape and mutilation, was oft-noted as the most disturbing moment of Bailey's production. Critic Sam Marlowe describes this most disturbing image of the play: "violated, her hands and her tongue cruelly cut away, she stumbles into view drenched in blood, flesh dangling from her hacked wrists, moaning and keening, almost animalistic. It's the production's most powerful symbolic image, redolent of the dehumanising effects of war.".[198] Other reviews called Rees's performance "requisitely unsettling, shaking and spasming," a triumph in managing "the transformation from proud Roman maid to maimed, mute victim," and a true expression of "horrible"

---

[194] "*Titus Andronicus*- Shakespeare's Globe (Review)."

[195] Natasha Tripney, "Titus Andronicus @ Shakespeare's Globe, London," Music OMH, 1 May 2006. http://www.musicomh.com/theatre/titus_0506.htm. Web. 19 Sept 2015.

[196] Van Gelder.

[197] Stephanie Condron, "Not for the Fainthearted," (CanadianContent, 3 March 2006). Web. 22 Oct 2010. http://forums.canadiancontent.net/movies-music-books/47482-theatre-goers-faint-during-bloody.html

[198] Sam Marlowe, "Titus Andronicus." Review. *The Times*, 1 June 2006. The Sunday Times. Web 20 Oct. 2010. http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article670088.ece

grief.[199] The impact of this staging upon audience members was, by many accounts, dramatic and disturbing.

Bailey's production staged *Titus* in a way that many audience members, including critics, found to be overwhelming; tragedy inspired the ideal Aristotelian experiences of pity, fear, and horror, and in some cases triggered physiological response (such as fainting). Equally as significant, the act of performing these scenes had a considerable physical impact upon the actors. In her blog about the experience of playing Lavinia, Laura Rees described both the emotional and physical demands of the role. When rehearsals first started, she reported feeling "depressed" and "nervous" about performing the after-effects of Lavinia's rape and mutilation; she "ignored" the scene until she felt emotionally prepared to practice it. In preparation, Rees read extensively about rape victims, spoke with a psychiatrist, and researched current stories of the mutilation of women in Sierra Leone. Once rehearsal of 2.4 began, she described her own very real physical discomfort as a result of practicing the rape scene. She reported, "You can tell from the bruises all over me that I've been acting a lot...The run of the first half is relentless. I've hurt my neck from the shaking in the first half. Physically and emotionally so much has happened to me, I've got so much tension in my body. I need to find a way of playing it without putting this much tension in my body, or I'll

[199] Tripney, "Titus Andronicus."; "Theater Review: *Titus Andronicus* at Shakespeare's Globe." http://blogcritics.org/culture/article/theater-review-titus-andronicus-at-shakespeares/; Charles Spencer, "The Horror Endures." Telegraph. co.uk, 1 June 2006. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3652794/The-horror-endures.html

be hospitalised by June. It is my fault."[200] In addition to the bruises and cuts on her body, as well as the emotional and physical tension, Rees described her feelings of disgust about performing with fake blood. She said, "I'm not liking the blood at all, and I get covered in it...I have to hold this sugary, disgusting stuff in my mouth. It's like eating too many sweets when you are a child."[201] Rees's experience of performing pain unsettles the boundaries between fiction and reality; performing pain produces real pain, while performing horror results in real feelings of disgust.

Rather than functioning as a closed system of signification, Rees's Lavinia in pain opens a "chaotic system" in which representation, spectatorship, performance, and physical sensation converge. The staged body in pain profoundly disturbs categorical distinctions between performer and spectator; the actors' experience functions in dynamic exchange with that of the audience. In rehearsals leading up to opening night, Rees anticipated audience response: "We have been thinking about the audience reaction a bit, particularly after I've been raped. I'm doing a lot of grotesque movement and initially the reaction might be to laugh, which is the wrong reaction."[202] Her thoughts on performances continually returned to the problem of laughter, which she suggested can be an issue with particularly "bloodthirsty" audiences. Her reflections intimate that laughter is always a possibility in a live performance of *Titus*, but a successful performance will be able to maintain control of

[200] Laura Rees's blog notes may be found on the Globe Theater website, "Rehearsal Notes 5": http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/adopt-an-actor/archive/lavinia-played-by-laura-rees/rehearsal-notes-5.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

audience response and will illuminate "something serious getting through."[203] Indeed, despite Rees's descriptions of laughter during performances, the actors' reflections on the play display an equal attention to audience distress. An interview with Douglas Hodge, who played Titus, reveals the impact of such audience response upon his performance. He said, "It's like pebbles dropping into a lake…You see them fall, you hear the knock of their head on the concrete, the concern around them. There was one night where someone fell towards the stage, and I very nearly stopped. But you couldn't stop for all of them…I absolutely dread every performance."[204] Rees also reported that her entrance in 2.4 produced a staggering impact upon the audience. According to critic Stephanie Condron, "Rees said she saw a young woman faint in front of her on Wednesday night. Within minutes, a middle-aged man nearby had also dropped and a woman in her sixties in the middle gallery, sitting above them, passed out."[205] According to the actress, "Normally I do not notice if people faint, as I tend to be quite engrossed in the theatre. But I did notice that first lady. She was slap-bang in the middle at the front. I heard people stumbling around then I could see the ushers dealing with it...Everyone knows it is stage blood but it is still shocking."[206] The reflections of both Rees and Hodge suggest that the production of horror onstage created a feedback loop; staged pain initiated audience response, which significantly impacted the actors onstage. In fact, for some, the play's impact lasted well past closing night. Rees reported that the entire integrated experience of playing Lavinia left a lasting mark upon her:

---

[203] Ibid.

[204] "The Horror Endures."

[205] In Stephanie Condron's "Not for the Faintheartedd." CanadianContent, 3 March 2006. Web. 22 Oct 2010. http://forums.canadiancontent.net/movies-music-books/47482-theatre-goers-faint-during-bloody.html

[206] Ibid.

"Lavinia has left me with more of a wound than I thought she would. It's something I don't really want to think about. The more I've done it, the more the horror has embedded itself."[207] In Bailey's Globe Theater production, *Titus* became its own reciprocal system of representation and reaction.

Bailey's *Titus* illuminates the complex interplay of emotional and physical experience instigated by staging a body in pain. However, this case study is not merely an isolated incident, but rather functions as an example of the unexpected and chaotic ramifications of performing pain. Not only does the process of enacting the body in pain onstage create a bridge between an actor's experience and the subjective experiences of audience members, but this process also simultaneously confuses the boundary between fictional representation and "real" embodied experience. The body in pain onstage actually *does something* to the bodies of the actors representing such suffering, and also to the audience members who witness the enactment.

Because the interactions between bodies, both spontaneous and staged, fictional and "real," produce energies, ideas, responses, and passions ungoverned by a closed and controlled system of representation, the product of staged pain, we find, can often emerge as the unexpected. But of course, this unpredictability is not a modern phenomenon. And are we in fact dealing with the unpredictable? Across centuries and historical shifts, the conflation of horror and hilarity, we find, has repeatedly been an element of these plays. While directors diagnose laughter as "problematic," its ubiquity begs an important question: is laughter actually inherent to the experience of staging pain?

---

[207] "Rehearsal Notes 5": http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/adopt-an-actor/archive/lavinia-played-by-laura-rees/rehearsal-notes-5

I argue that the answer to this question is yes, and I propose there are various possibilities as to why staged pain and laughter coexist. From the perspective of a religious history, as I explored in my discussion of the York Tilemakers' pageant, the incorporation of comedy in the Passion sequence may be read as an intentional manipulation of audience emotion as a means to assure maximum catharsis as well as Christian guilt. In the context of my discussion of the ontological gaps in signification in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, the disconnect between the embodied experience of pain and the capacity of language to accurately signify such experience produces a liminal space of absurdity; both audiences and Titus himself can only laugh in response to the rift between language and meaning.

Of course, language to describe pain and images to convey it are inherently linked to historical and cultural frameworks. If we back away from a historical approach to consider the experience of staged pain from a cognitive perspective, we may find other possibilities to explain why human beings laugh to see the bodies of other human beings in pain. Studies of neuro-psychology indicate the possibility of "mood contagion": "the unintentional imitation of another person's emotional behavior, which in turn activates a congruent mood state in the observer."[208] In other words, if one audience member cries, swoons, faints, or even laughs, the emotions of the audience, as well as the actors, affect one another. This theory explains the emotional differences from night to night of performances: one audience may be carried away by horror, while the next may be swept up in hilarity. The potential for mood contagion brings an unpredictable dynamic to every individual performance of a play.

[208] Roland Neumann and Fritz Strack, "'Mood Contagion': The Automatic Transfer of Mood Between Persons." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79.2 (2000): 211.

But why does the first person laugh to initiate the hilarity? The problem, as I see it, is actually most interesting when we consider the work of mirror neurons in the theater. As Amy Cook writes in "A Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre," our brains, and in particular mirror neurons, "do not discriminate between an act performed and a witnessed act."[209] Therefore, as I have described, the experience of watching a person on stage playing pain is the same, cognitively, as that of watching a person who is in "real" pain. Sophisticated studies in mirror neuron function clearly explain how and why people would faint at a performance: to witness another person's pain (whether or not it's real) can activate the brain of a witness as if it, too, was in pain.

However, sometimes people laugh. Laughter is the physiological and psychological opposite of crying.[210] As articulated by Mendez, Nakawatase, and Brown, laughter "conveys a lack of distress, a recognition that the 'danger' is not real…An incongruous relationship between what is perceived and what is expected is the essence of humor."[211] Therefore, despite the work of mirror neurons to activate a brain's sympathetic response, the underlying understanding that the "danger is not real" overrides a reaction of horror. Further, the juxtaposition between what an audience sees and what they expect to see onstage may incite laughter, especially in theatrical moments that lack realistic precision.

Rather than assuming the failure of performances in which audiences laugh at stage pain, I assert that these responses are equally meaningful. If we consider the

---

[209] Amy Cook, "Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre," *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 591.

[210] Mario F. Mendez, Tomoko V. Nakawatase, and Charles V. Brown, "Involuntary Laughter and Inappropriate Hilarity," *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 11.2 (Spring 1999): 254.

[211] Ibid.

phenomenological and cognitive similarities between witnessing a performance of staged pain and the "performance" of real pain, varied audience response actually reflects the real ways in which people fail to acknowledge, interpret, or understand the pain of other people. In relation to our own bodies, the body in pain onstage temporarily relieves us that pain is not happening to us at that particular moment, but simultaneously reminds us of the absurdity of the mortal condition.

Bibliography

Aers, David. "New Historicism and the Eucharist." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2003).

-----"A Whisper in the Ear of the Early Modernists." In *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing,* edited by David Aers. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.

Anderson, Thomas Page. *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.

Ardonlino, Frank. "'In Paris? Mass, and Well Remembered!': Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the English Reaction to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre." *Sixteenth Century Journal,* Vol. 21, No. 3. (Autumn, 1990), pp. 401-409.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence.* New York: Harcourt, 1969.

-----*The Portable Hannah Arendt.* Ed. Peter Baehr. London: Penguin Books, 2000.

Aristotle. *Poetics*, in *The Critical Tradition*, *Third Edition*, ed. David H. Richter. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006.

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Baines, Barbara. *Representing Rape in the English Early Modern Period.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Baker, Howard. "Ghosts and Guides: Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and the Medieval Tragedy." *Modern Philology*, Vol. 33, No. 1. (Aug,. 1935), pp. 27-35.

Barker, Roberta. *Early Modern Tragedy, Gender and Performance, 1984-2000: The Destined Livery*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 55-82.

Beadle, Richard and Pamela King, ed. *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Beckwith, Sarah. *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings.* New York: Routledge, 1993.

-----"Ritual, Church and Theatre." In *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, edited by David Aers. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.

Bennett, Natalie. "Theater Review: *Titus Andronicus* at Shakespeare's Globe." *BC Culture*. Web. 1 July 2011

Bevington, David. *From Mankind to Marlowe.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book. Ed. John E. Booty. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005.

Brown, John Russell. "Writing About Shakespeare's Plays in Performance," in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. Grace Ioppolo. Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2000.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. London: Routledge and Paul; New York, Columbia University Press, 1957.

Burks, Deborah. *Horrid Spectacle: Violation in the Theater of Early Modern England.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2003.

Calvin, John. *The Institutes of Christian Religion.* Ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987.

Camporesi, Piero. *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991.

Charnes, Linda. "'So Unsecret to Ourselves': Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, No. 4. (Winter 1989): 413-440.

Clough, Patricia and Jean Halley, ed. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Condron, Stephanie. "Not for the Fainthearted," *CanadianContent*, 3 March 2006. Web. 22 Oct 2010. http://forums.canadiancontent.net/movies-music-books/47482-theatre-goers-faint-during-bloody.html.

Cook, Amy. "Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 579-594.

Crane, Mary Thomas. *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Cunningham, Karen. "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of

Death." *PMLA* 2 (March 1990): 209-222.

Davidson, Clifford. "The Realism of the York Realist and the York Passion." *Speculum* 50:2 (April 1975): 270-283.

Davidson, Clifford and Thomas H. Seiler. *The Iconography of Hell*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1992.

Dessen, Alan. *Shakespeare and Performance: Titus Andronicus*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Dickson, Lisa. "'High' Art and 'Low' Blows: *Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Language of Pain." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26:1 (Spring 2008): 1-22.

Diehl, Huston. *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England.* Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Doidge, Norman. "Pain: The Dark Side of Plasticity." In *The Brain the Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science.* New York: Viking, 2007.

Duer, L. "The Landscape of Imagination in *The Duchess of Malfi.*" *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter, 1979-1980), pp. 3-9.

Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Enders, Jody. *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Enterline, Lynn. *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare.* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Fitzhenry, William. "The N-Town Plays and the Politics of Metatheater." *Studies in Philology* 100, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 22-43.

The Forty-Two Articles, 1553; The Thirty-Eight Articles, 1563, The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1571. In *Documents of the English Reformation*. Ed. Gerald Bray. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Foster, Frances A., ed. *The Northern Passion.* London: Early English Text Society, 1916.

Foxe, John. *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (The Book of Martyrs). London: John Day, dwellyng ouer Aldersgate, 1563. (electronic resource).

Gallagher, Shaun and Dan Zahavi. *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science.* New York: Routledge, 2008.

Gibson, Gail McMurray. *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Glenberg, Arthur. "What Memory Is For: Creating Meaning in the Service of Action." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 20, no. 1 (1997): 41-50.

Glicksohn, Joseph and Chanita Goodblatt. "From Practical Criticism to the Practice of Literary Criticism." *Poetics Today* 24, No. 2 (Summer 2003): 207-236.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

-----*Shakespearean Negotiations.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Groebner, Valentin. *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages.* Trans. Pamela Selwyn. New York: Zone Books, 2004.

Gussow, Mel. "Stage View: Englishwomen Make an Impact as Directors." *The New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1988. Web. 1 July 2011.

Haigh, Christopher. *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Henderson, Andrea. "Death on the Stage, Death of the Stage: The Antitheatricality of *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Theatre Journal* 42, No. 2 (May 1990): 194-207.

"Here bigynnes a tretise of miraclis pleyinge," in Anne Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1997.

Hope-Wallace, Philip. "Archive Theatre Review: Elizabethan Carnage Nearly Credible." *The Guardian*, August 17, 1955. Web. Accessed 1 July 2011. http://www.theguardian.com/stage/1955/aug/17/peter-brook-titus-andronicus

Hudson, Anne, ed. *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Jackson, Ken. *Separate Theaters: Bethlem ("Bedlam") Hospital and the Shakespearean Stage*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005.

Kearney, James. *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Kinney, Arthur F. (Ed.). *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Kristeva, Julia. *Language, the Unknown: An Initiation Into Linguistics*. Trans. Anne M. Menke. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

-----*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish tragedie containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio, and Bel-imperia: with the pittifull death of olde Hieronimo. , At London : Printed by Edward Allde, for Edward White,* 1592. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 12 February 2009. http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/search

"The Lamentable and Tragical History of *Titus Andronicus*; with the Fall of his 25 Sons, in the Wars of the Goths, with the manner of the Ravishment of his Daughter, Lavinia by the Empresses two Sons, through the means of a Bloody Moor, taken by the Sword of Titus, in the War; with his Revenge upon their Cruel and Inhumane Act." Printed for *I. Clarke, W. Thackeray,* and *T. Passinger.* English Broadside Ballad Archive. University of California, Santa Barbara. 10 December 2008. http://emc.english.ucsb.edu/ballad_project/large_detail.asp?id=20800

Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Leggatt, Andrew. "Standing Back From Tragedy: Three Detachable Scenes," in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. Grace Ioppolo. Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2000.

Lerud, Theodore K. *Memory, Images, and the English Corpus Christi Drama.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Lindstrom, Bengt, ed. *The Late Middle English Version of The Gospel of Nicodemus: Edited from British Museum MS Harley 149*. Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974.

Love, Nicholas. *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ.* Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 2005.

Luther, Martin. *Collected Works of Martin Luther*. Bibliobazaar, 2007.

MacKay, Ellen. "The Theatre as a Self-Consuming Art." *Theatre Survey* 49:1 (May 2008).

Madelaine, Richard. "'The dark and vicious place': The Location of Sexual Transgression and its Punishment on the Early Modern English Stage." *Parergon* 22.1 (2005).

Marlowe, Sam. "Titus Andronicus." Review. *The Times*, 1 June 2006. The Sunday Times. Web 20 Oct. 2010.

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article670088.

Marshall, Cynthia. *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Maus, Katharine Eisaman. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

McConachie, Bruce A. *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre.* New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

McConachie, Bruce A. and F. Elizabeth Hart. *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*. London: Routledge, 2006.

McMillan, Scott. "The Figure of Silence in the *Spanish Tragedy.*" *ELH*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar. 1972), pp. 27-48.

McNeir, Waldo. "The Corpus Christi Passion Plays as Dramatic Art." *Studies in Philology* 48, no. 3, Studies in Mediaeval Culture (July 1951): 601-628.

Mendez, Mario F., Tomoko V. Nakawatase, and Charles V. Brown. "Involuntary Laughter and Inappropriate Hilarity." *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 11.2 (Spring 1999): 253-258.

Metz, G. Harold. "Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Spring 1977), pp. 154-169.

The Middle English Prose Complaint of Our Lady and Gospel of Nicodemus. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987.

Montrose, Louis Adrian. "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology." *Helios* 7 (1980): 51-74.

Moore, Don D. "Introduction" in *John Webster: The Critical Heritage.* New York: Routledge, 1981, 3-26.

----- "John Webster in the Modern Theatre." *Educational Theatre Journal* 17:4 (Dec. 1965): 314-321.

Morris, David. *The Culture of Pain.* Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Elizabethan England.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1988.

Murray, Barbara A. *Shakespeare Adaptations from the Restoration: Five Plays*. Cranbury,

NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005.

Neumann Roland and Fritz Strack. "'Mood Contagion': The Automatic Transfer of Mood Between Persons." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79.2 (2000): 211-223.

O'Connell, Michael. *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm & Theater in Early-Modern England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

-----"*King Lear* and the Summons of Death." In *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages.* Ed. Curtis Perry and John Watkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 199-216.

-----"Mocker, Farce, and *Risus Paschalis* in the York *Christ Before Herod*." In *Ludus. Medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama, Vol. 6: Farce and Farcical Elements*, edited by Wim Hüsken, Konrad Schoell and Leif Søndergaard, 45-58. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Publishers, 2002.

-----"Vital Cultural Practices: Shakespeare and the Mysteries." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1999).

Owens, Margaret. *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama.* Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2005.

Palmer, Alan. *Fictional Minds.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Pappano, Margaret Aziza and Nicole R. Rice. "'Beginning and Beginning Again': Processions, Plays, and Civic Politics in York and Chester." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 30 (2008): 269-301.

Patrides, C.A. "Renaissance and Modern Views on Hell." *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Jul., 1964), pp. 217-236.

Paster, Gail Kern. *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance.* London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Ravenscroft, Edward. *Titus Andronicus, or, The rape of Lavinia acted at the Theatre Royall : a tragedy, alter'd from Mr. Shakespears works / by Mr. Edw. Ravenscroft.* London : Printed by J.B. for J. Hindmarsh ..., 1687. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 1 February 2009. http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/search

Reese, Jack E. "The Formalization of Horror in *Titus Andronicus.*" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter, 1970), pp. 77-84.

"Rehearsal Notes 5." *Shakespeare's Globe.* Web. Accessed 15 Sept. 2015. http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/adopt-an-actor/archive/lavinia-played-by-laura-rees/rehearsal-notes-5.

Robinson, J.W. "The Art of the York Realist." *Modern Philology* 60, no. 4 (May 1963): 241-251.

Rowe, Katherine. "'That Curious Engine': Action at a Distance in *The Duchess of Malfi,*" in *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Rubin, Miri. *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Sacks, Peter. "Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare." *ELH*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 576-601.

Saint Bonaventure. *The Prickynge of Love.* Edited by Harold Kane and Walter Hilton. Salzburg, Austria: Institut fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universitat Salzburg, 1983.

Sartre, Jean Paul. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1948.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain*: *The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

-----*Dreaming by the Book*. New York: Fararr, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Seigworth, Gregory J. and Melissa Gregg, ed. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

"Shakespeare's Globe Goes Under Cover." *IndieLondon.* Web. 1 July 2011. http://www.indielondon.co.uk/Theatre-Review/shakespeares-globe-goes-undercover.

Shakespeare, William. *The most lamentable Romaine tragedie of Titus Andronicus As it was plaide by the right honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earl of Pembrooke, and Earl of Sussex their seruants.* London : Printed by Iohn Danter, and are to be sold by Edward White & Thomas Millington, at the little North doore of Paules at the signe of the Gunne, 1594. Early English Books Online. Cambridge University Library. 12 October 2008. http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/search

-----*The Norton Shakespeare.* Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Andrew Gurr. New York: W.W.

Norton, 1997.

-----*Titus Andronicus*. Ed. Russ McDonald. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Shrank, Cathy. *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Smith, Molly. "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama. (Spring, 1992), pp. 217-232.

Spencer, Charles. "The Horror Endures." *Telegraph*. co.uk, 1 June 2006. Web. Accessed 15 Sept. 2015. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3652794/The-horror-endures.html.

Steggle, Matthew. *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007.

Taylor, Paul. "Titus Andronicus, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon." *The Independent*, Sept. 29, 2003. Web. 1 July 2011.

Tennenhouse, Leonard. "Playing and Power." In *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama.* Ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. New York: Routledge, 1991.

"*Titus Andronicus* Complaint." London printed for E. Wright. c. 1624. English Broadside Ballad Archive. University of California, Santa Barbara. 10 December 2008. http://emc.english.ucsb.edu/ballad_project/ballad_image.asp?id=20040.

"*Titus Andronicus*- Shakespeare's Globe (Review)" (*IndieLondon*). Web. 1 July 2011. http://www.indielondon.co.uk/Theatre-Review/titus-andronicus-shakespeares-globe-review.

Tricomi, A.H. "The Severed Hand in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi." Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* Vol. 44, 2004.

-----"Historicizing the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi.*" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 2004 34 (2): pp. 345-372.

Tripney, Natasha. "Titus Andronicus @ Shakespeare's Globe, London." *Music OMH*, 1 May 2006. Accessed 19 Sept 2015 http://www.musicomh.com/theatre/titus_0506.htm.

The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle. Ed. A.C. Cawley. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979.

Walker, D.P. *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*. In *John Webster: The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*. Ed. Rene Weis, Michael Cordner, Peter Holland, and Martin Wiggins. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 103-200.

-----*The Duchess of Malfi*. In *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 637-698.

-----*The tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy As it was presented privatly, at the Black-Friers; and publiquely at the Globe, by the Kings Majesties Servants. The perfect and exact coppy, with diverse things printed, that the length of the play would not beare in the presentment. Written by John Webster. ,* London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, for John Waterson, and are to be sold at the signe of the Crowne, in Paules Church-yard, 1623. *Early English Books Online*. Web. http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/search?ACTION=GOTO&SOURCE=var_spell.cfg&FILE=../session/1272910218_4644&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&DISPLAY=AUTHOR&ECCO=&SIZE=10

Wessman, Christopher. "'I'll Play Diana': Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the 'Actaeon Complex'." *English Studies* (2001): 401-419.

White, Paul Whitfield. *Drama and Religion in English Provincial Society, 1485-1660.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Wiles, David. *A Short History of Western Performance Space.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Womack, Peter. "Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century." In *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing.* Edited by David Aers. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.

Woodbridge, Linda, and Sharon Beehler, ed. *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature: Essays Honoring Paul Jorgenson*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003.

Worthen, W.B. *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

York Mystery Plays. Ed. Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Zamir, Tzachi. “Wooden Subjects.” *New Literary History*, 39:2 (Spring 2008): 277-300.